

Best of both worlds: Elsdon Best and the metamorphosis of Māori spirituality. Te painga rawa o ngā ao rua: Te Peehi me te putanga kē o te wairua Māori.

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Māori in the University of Canterbury

by

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2007

Contents.

Abstract. 3-4.

Introduction. 5-17.

Chapter 1. “New Zealand and the People without History”: Post-colonial Discourse Theory and Literature Review. 18-84.

Chapter 2. Early intellectual influences on Best: visions of the primitive mind. 86-122.

Chapter 3. Tuhoe into Print: Best’s writing life in the Urewera, 1895-1910. 123 -193.

Chapter 4. Best and Nature: the origins of a localised Romanticism in his popular writings. 194-227.

Chapter 5. The Māori according to Best: “Ka tō he rā, ka ura he rā!”. 228-275.

Chapter 6. Tutakangahau on the record: historicizing a Māori informant. 276-329.

Chapter 7. Best’s bequest: mauri in Best, and the post-mortem literature. 330-376.

Conclusion. 377-381.

Acknowledgements / Mihimihi. 382.

Appendices. 383-458.

Bibliography. 459-477.

Abstract.

Best of both worlds: Elsdon Best and the metamorphosis of Māori spirituality.
Te painga rawa o ngā ao tokorua: Te Peehi me te putanga kē o te wairua
Māori.

This thesis is a study in the history of ideas in late 19th and early 20th century New Zealand: it examines the writings and correspondence of the Pākehā ethnographer, Elsdon Best, and his principal Tuhoe source, Tutakangahau of Maungapohatu. His intellectual influences are analysed, especially the writings of Edward Tylor and Max Müller, and their views on socio-cultural evolution, human progress, and a myth-making stage in humanity's development. Such mentors combined to produce Best's over-riding literary image: the mythopoetic Māori. The study charts his transformation from field anthropologist to government ethnographer at the Dominion Museum (Wellington), arguing that Best is the father of received versions of Māori culture.

The work traces Tutakangahau's history in published sources and official correspondence, to evince the political reality in which Māori were fully engaged. This conflicts with Best's romantic vision of the surviving "oldtime Maori" as yesterday's men. By writing of Māori as primitive survivals, Best managed to both exoticise and detemporalise his subjects. The sources are his articles, correspondence, notebooks and published monographs; in Tutakangahau's case, letters and reports in the *AJHR*. The thesis questions the political argument that Best has misrepresented Māori, presenting him instead as the author of modern visions of Māori authenticity.

Best sought a lost Māori being (ontology), obliterated by colonisation; the essential, pre-contact Māori psyche he described has remained active and pervasive in subsequent literature. His views have been absorbed into a reconstructed authentic Māori being, based on tradition - particularly in the post WW2 Māori renaissance. Many advocates of such essentialism seem unaware of the presence of Best's image of Māori authenticity in their writings. The study argues that there is no possibility of a late 19th century Māori epistemology unmediated by Pākehā influence. Through an evidential examination of Best's use of sources, a metamorphosis of views on Māori spirituality is observed taking place in the period. The thesis concludes that the post-mortem rejection of Best's methods and conclusions have led to an under-estimation of his underlying influence in the literature.

Abbreviations.

AJHR. Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives.

ATL. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

CT. Canterbury Times.

JPS. Journal of the Polynesian Society.

MA. Māori Affairs.

NA. National Archives, Wellington.

NZJH. New Zealand Journal of History.

WW2. World War Two.

Introduction.

"Best of both worlds: Elsdon Best and the metamorphosis of Māori spirituality. Te painga rawa o ngā ao tokorua: Te Peehi¹ me te putanga kē o te wairua Māori".

This project is a study in the history of ideas in late nineteenth and early twentieth century New Zealand, examining the published writings and correspondence of the Pākehā ethnographer, Elsdon Best, and his principal Māori source amongst Tuhoe, the Tamakaimoana chief, Tutakangahau of Maungapohatu. The work looks at Best's intellectual influences, both local and international, especially the writings of E. B. Tylor and F. Max Müller. Their views on socio-cultural evolution, human progress and a mythmaking stage in the mental development of humanity, were powerful influences on him. His biographical influences, both Pākehā and Māori are also examined, and the ways they combined in his aims, to produce an overriding literary image: the mythopoetic Māori. The study charts the transformation of Best from a pioneering ethnographic fieldworker to the great white tohunga of the Dominion Museum in Wellington. Best is revealed as the most important of the early New Zealand ethnographers and the father of received versions of Māori culture.

The study traces Tutakangahau's history in published sources and official correspondence, such as his letters to government agents and the Premier, Richard Seddon. The aim is to restore something of their conversations and signal the political reality in which Māori were fully engaged. This conflicts

¹ This transliteration of "Best" is variously rendered "pehi and Peehi" in Māori letters and documents from 1895 onwards, but the double vowel becomes more standard over time, as does the capitalisation of the name (see eg, Buck/Ngata letters of the 1930s). The form as used in the title above reflects what is now standard practice amongst Māori who use the transliteration.

with Best's romantic vision of the surviving "oldtime Māori" as yesterday's men. These men were emblematic of conflicting views of the Māori past and their present at the turn of the 20th century; there was a persistent Pākehā tendency to anthropologise Māori history, minimising Māori involvement in the politics of modernity. By writing of Māori as primitive survivals, and seeking to isolate their unique psyche as "mythopoetic", Best managed to both exoticise and detemporalise his subjects. The major sources are his early published articles, letters to other ethnographers, notebooks and published monographs; in Tutakangahau's case, letters and reports in the *AJHR*. The major goal of the thesis is to question the political argument that a racist Best has completely misrepresented Māori, and present him instead as the disowned author of modern visions of Māori being.

This thesis then has two major premises: in the first instance that Best sought a lost Māori being (ontology) obliterated by colonisation, and that what he came to see as the essential, pre-contact Māori psyche has remained active and pervasive in the subsequent literature. Since his death in 1931, Best's views have been absorbed into a reconstructed "authentic being" based on "tradition"- particularly in the post WW2 Māori renaissance. Many advocates of an essential Māori being seem unaware of - or fail to acknowledge - the presence of Best's image of an authentic Māori being in their own versions. The thesis also aims to show that there is no possibility of a late 19th century Māori epistemology unmediated by Pākehā influence. In examining what Best made of his sources through an evidential study of his writings, a metamorphosis of views on Māori spirituality is observed as taking place in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This is not a discussion of Māori spirituality per se - nor traditional Māori belief and practice prior to European contact - but an attempt to assess what Best did with the materials he gathered, and the subsequent effect of their publication on views of Māori religion and essential being. The thesis will argue that the post-mortem rejection of Best's methods and views has led to an under-estimation of his pervasive influence in the literature.

Overview:

This introduction opens the discussion of Best's influence, placing his ideas in their historical context, laying out the contents of the thesis chapter-by-chapter. The problem of his writings as a largely unexamined and uncontested view of traditional Māori lifeways and their culture is outlined.

Chapter 1. Theory and Literature Review:

This chapter breaks into two related halves: a discussion of colonial discourse theory and a review of the New Zealand literature on Best. The aims of part (a) are to test and examine theoretical models such as orientalism, alterity, subalternity, historicism and the place of syncretism in the collision of traditional societies with colonial modernity. What is the role of the theorist in affirming or undermining the possibility of indigenous agency? The theme-based structure of the review is to break down the general writings on issues in colonial representations and early anthropology. Section (b) moves on to more subject-specific publications applicable to the New Zealand and Tuhoe situations. This will involve some reference to cognate areas, but more importantly, identifying gaps in the field concerning Best, a summary of the common knowledge, and the positioning of this thesis to show a unique contribution.

The examination of theoretical writing opens with international contributors (Said and Gellner, Wolf and Chakrabarty), examining colonial discourse theory from its beginnings in orientalism to recent debates about the dehistoricisation of the subaltern subject. The work of George Stocking on Victorian anthropology sets the scene for an appraisal of New Zealand writers and the application of 19th century intellectual models to the New Zealand scene. Section (b) of the chapter assesses Ballantyne, Sorrenson and Howe on

the New Zealand, Pacific and imperial strands in colonial ethnography; articles and theses on Best and Tuhoe, including Sissons, Ballara and Reilly; and contemporary Māori criticism (Smith, Marie). It calls for a return to the written record - in particular, the mass of untranslated Māori letters to government in national archives - primary sources which may call into question received certainties.

Chapter 2. Early intellectual influences on Best: visions of the primitive mind.

Best's thinking was deeply shaped by overseas writers, but little has been done to examine by whom and to what degree. This chapter considers local and overseas sources of Best's thinking, as he began to develop theoretical positions on culture, civilisation and the primitive. This thesis argues that writers such as E. B. Tylor, F. Max Müller and Herbert Spencer were powerful influences in shaping his worldview and providing him with theoretical models. The aim of examining their impact on his evolving thought is to uncover his basic assumptions about culture and race, as reinforced by the scholarship he accessed from the mid - to late 19th century debates on the nature (and relationship) of culture and civilisation. The question addressed by this chapter is to what extent did he accept the major socio-cultural evolutionary models as scientifically sound, and to what extent was he bounded by their limitations and his own preconceptions. The research involved in this chapter makes it clear that Best had absorbed the dominant anthropological models of his day by the time of this arrival in the Urewera amongst Tuhoe (1895) - and that his creation of the mythopoetic Māori is a result of his intellectual debt to Müller. His concepts of cultural hierarchies can be found in Tylor, while the extinctionist model that relates to an evolutionary progress of humankind is the work of Herbert Spencer and his popularisers. He belonged to a local intellectual milieu: the founders of late 19th century Polynesian ethnography, Percy Smith and Edward Tregear. They introduced him to the above literature - in Smith's case, creating the opening later for him to do his pioneering fieldwork amongst Tuhoe.

Chapter 3. Tuhoe in print: Best's writings from the Urewera, 1895-1910.

This chapter looks at ways Best used the foregoing foundational material in his major fieldwork; it examines a cross section of Best's writings either written and published during the Urewera years, or - in the case of his major work, *Tuhoe* - published later (1925). Best's sojourn amongst Tuhoe greatly expanded his firsthand experience, as well as confirming his existing positions. The chapter tests the hypothesis that views of his informants' material were distorted by a romantic, backward-looking vision of an essentialised Māori psychology. The early writings from this period are examined closely: his letters to Percy Smith, 1895-1908; sections of "*Tuhoe*" (Vol I, Pt II: iii.); articles in the *Journal of the Polynesian Society* (JPS), 1897-1907; and various newspaper articles (*The Press*, *Canterbury Times*).

The chapter analyses five major issues recurring in these genres over the period 1895-1910: identity and belonging, Māori authenticity, esoterica and the Io concept, primitive survivals and Māori agency. This involves some speculation on Best's need for Māori in order to locate his own identity, and the metaphysical nature of his quest for the "kura huna" (hidden knowledge). It is argued that a supposed pristine Māori nature, located in a vanished past, exoticised Māori culture and contributed to their disempowerment in the present.

Two major issues emerge from this study of Best's Urewera writings, both concerning the question of agency. In Best we have an example of Pākehā using Māori cultural materials to define Māori *being*. Behind this extensively documented strategy, we see glimpses of Māori using Pākehā cultural forms to do the same. Best and Smith use whakapapa (genealogies) to locate Māori

in the sweep of a secular Western chronology and in a mystic past. Tutakangahau and the prophet Rua Kenana use the biblical traditions of genealogy and prophecy to align that past with a literate, Christian modernity, and resist the illegitimacies of settler power.

Chapter 4. Best and Nature: the origins of a localised Romanticism in his popular writings.

Best's views of nature/Nature are examined, and the way this affected his views of Māori and their place in an evolutionary schema. These views bore little relationship to the actual situation of Tuhoe (and other Māori) in his day, as becomes clear from a close textual examination of his first published book, *Waikaremoana* (1897). This chapter concerns Best's popular writings on nature/Nature and discusses the cultural sources of his Romanticism, its indigenisation, and effects on his views of Māori relationships to the wilderness. The method will be to provide a close reading of his popular writings on nature and solitude. It will examine various aspects of the way he views and deploys the natural world, especially as a site for "primitive" psychology, and the importance a solitary relationship with the bush in order to access an essentialised Māori psyche, to walk "the mental trails of primitive man". This relationship of psyche to environment is a consistent theme, from the earliest article examined (1892), through to the later publications (1920). An assessment will be made of the influence on Best of the German Romantics, via Emerson and American Transcendentalism, British Romantics such as Wordsworth and Coleridge, and the German philologist, F. Max Müller.

His models were seductive: a Romantic Nature that gave rise to the "mythopoetic" psychology of Māori, alongside a Spencerian, progressive, evolutionary Nature. These together explained their inability to assimilate European cultural forms, and guaranteed Māori extinction. The fact that such models could not accommodate recent history, and flew in the face of social changes Best was well aware of did not detract from their plausibility. Many

Tuhoe that Best observed were different from Pākehā in their relationship to the bush - but rather than simply describing such differences, he is inclined to project upon them an entire view of savage nature and the savage in nature. The analytical paradigms available to him at the time, the theorising of his own experience, and the sheer force of settler public opinion dictated to a large extent his conclusions. The chapter argues that the *nature* Best writes of was that produced by his *culture*; that when he looked on Waikaremoana, and at Tutakangahau, a great deal of what he saw was a reflection of himself and the settler society to which he belonged.

Chapter 5. The Māori According To Best: “Ka tō he rā, ka ura he rā!”²

Best’s writings created an image of Māori that is overdue for re-assessment. The contention here is that “the Māori according to Best” is part-field observation and enquiry, part-imagination and a product of the emerging anthropology of race and empire. Texts are examined that reveal the underpinnings of such constructions as “the mythopoetic Māori”. This chapter will review the pillars of his vision of Māori identity and essential being constructed by the end of his life. The question that arises is did Best obscure and devalue through weak analysis the vast body of material he had collected and recorded so assiduously through a lifetime committed to the pursuit of Māori knowledge and lifeways? Or does he rather merit his own estimation: that he was primarily a collector racing against time, whose store of primary material would prove invaluable to later generations of trained anthropologists?

The principal areas to be examined are: Best and Māori origins, the Semitic and the Aryan Māori; literacy and culture ranking, language and rationality; essentialism and Māori being, the mythopoetic Māori; and the Māori spiritual

² “A sun sets, a sun rises!” (286) Quoted by Best as the trajectory of Māori in the evolutionary scheme of human progress. It appears as the last line in his influential general survey of traditional Māori society, *The Maori as he was*. (Best, 1924 (1974))

universe and the Io teachings. These are the most consistent themes of his writing life. The chapter will argue that Best's deductions led to his theorisation of Māori: weaving them into European meta-narratives. The search for Māori origins located them in history, either sacred or secular; defining Māori being, in evolutionary anthropology; and ranking their spirituality, in comparative religion – all of which served to anchor Pākehā frontier intellectuals in the new land by assimilating Māori points of difference into Western discursive modes.

In his search for an authentic Māori being, it is contended that Best was in part at least revealing his own atavistic needs and tendencies. In locating their origins, seeking out their mythologies and secrets, real or imagined, and trying to understand what it was to be Māori before Pākehā came, he appears to attempt at the same moment to describe and locate a new way of being for himself and his inheritors. If it was impossible for him to see Māori as Māori (and not as a version of Pākehā), he has also made it impossible for those coming after to be Pākehā here without reference to Māori: Māori self-definition, and Māori constructions of Pākehā themselves.

Chapter 6. Tutakangahau on the record: historicizing a Māori informant.

The situation and the problem addressed in this chapter revolves around the question: who was Tutakangahau? He appears in the ethnographer's writings as "Old Tu", Best's chief informant amongst Tuhoe and close friend, yet complete reliance cannot be placed on Best's accounts for a full picture of this man. It becomes a matter of agency (who holds the power to represent the self), and of alterity (in which frames of reference do we find the "other" portrayed). Tutakangahau's "voice" is mediated by Best's writing, and he is not heard: this is a distortion of who Tutakangahau was, and the chapter seeks to present a more nuanced, historicized view. To this end, the historical record is searched to find a presence unmediated by Best: his letters to government officials and their replies, parliamentary records, speeches and

tribunal reports. The aim is to hold this version up against Best's generalised view, and discuss any differences and tensions that emerge.

Nineteenth and early twentieth century Māori newspapers, both in libraries and online, allow access to the public – if not private – utterances of historical actors such as Tutakangahau. It is this type of little-known material that enables us to flesh out the portrait of a significant New Zealander, little known or recognised beyond his own people, Tuhoe. Tutakangahau lived through the arrival of a European historical consciousness, and like all hereditary chiefs in the latter half of the nineteenth century, was compelled to find a new self-definition. It is this process that brought him into relationship with Pākehā power brokers such as the Premier Richard Seddon and Best also. While he may have mourned the passing of the old world, as Best records, the written record he left behind shows him actively at work in the new, until his final years. He was one of the original members of Te Whitu Tekau (Union of Seventy), an early council of Tuhoe leaders attempting to protect their remaining territory after the land confiscations of the late 1860s. He was deeply involved in all Tuhoe efforts to maintain their autonomy, including the Reserve Commission of the late 1890s and early 1900s, almost until the time of his death in 1907.

On a more prosaic level, his long friendship with Best can be seen as just that: here were two intelligent men, both equipped with the cultural literacy to cross over into one another's worlds. Literate, bilingual and bicultural, self-taught and well able to withstand the rigours of life in the bush, it will be argued that there was more than just the mutual attachment to power, and the needs of ethnography as cultural preservation that bound these two men together over a long and difficult decade for Tuhoe hopes. As powerful and intelligent leaders and cultural mediators, their fifteen-year relationship can also be framed as an alliance of sorts, inside a complex of conflicting and ambiguous needs and ambitions. Those who read what remains in the record of the historical man, Tutakangahau, can decide how radically this figure destabilises Best's "Old Tu" and the fictionalised "Children of the Mist".

Chapter 7. Best's bequest: mauri in Best, and the post-mortem literature.

The thesis here is that Best's researches into Māori spirituality - here examined in his defining of the vital term mauri (life force, talisman) - have redefined such concepts and associated practices, and are now so embedded in the literature and Māori consciousness that his model is seen as pristine. This chapter addresses the need for an examination of Best's enduring and ongoing influences, not available so far in the literature. Through his scholarly and popular writings, Elsdon Best's researches into traditional Māori culture and lifeways entered the national bloodstream, in spite of the post-mortem criticism he received from a new breed of anthropologists. His star has waned even further since the Māori renaissance of the 1970s and onwards; but his work is never far from the surface in ways Māori have seen themselves, and Pākehā ideas of Māori identity.

Because of his significant literary legacy, Best has had a far-reaching influence on visions of Māori being and their spiritual life in particular. He was able to define Māori spirituality and assist in its re-invention, after the massive shifts in Māori culture from orality to literacy, in the wake of the 19th century missionary era. As will be seen in this chapter, it is most clearly apparent in his recording of spiritual terms, concepts and practice, especially from Tuhoe informants during the years 1895-1910, and later input from more urbane Māori informants such as Te Whatahoro Jury (1909-30). In detailing such words as mauri, hau and wairua, and conceptualising their meanings, relationships and application in the pre-contact world, it will be argued that Best began a process of re-invention and expansion that continues to this day. Such definitions, and other terms influenced by his work - now found in essentialist texts of the Māori identity movement - are often considered to be purely Māori in their origin, and deployed as part of a kaupapa Māori methodology (philosophy and metaphysics).

This chapter examines these deposits, especially in relation to definitions of spiritual terms (*mauri*, *hau*, *wairua*), as found in Williams' *Dictionary of the Māori Language* (1844-1971). Their provenance in pre-1840s culture is not in question; the focus here is on the expansion of their meanings, using his work. From 1895 onwards, Best's researches amongst Tuhoe began to find their way into lexicography of Maori - most visibly in the greatly enlarged 5th edition (1917) of this influential standard dictionary of classical and historical Māori language.

In arguing that Best shaped the modern view of traditional spirituality, the chapter traces the earliest appearance of the word *mauri* in the first Williams' *Dictionary of the Maori Language* (1844) and through to the fifth edition, making special note of Herbert W Williams' important foreword to the expanded edition. There, he credited Best with "the most important contribution in volume and character...his opinion on the esoteric knowledge of the Maori being of the greatest weight". (Williams, 1917, viii) The appearances of the word *mauri* in Best's writings are sourced, from 1898, until 1929 in the mature works, shortly before his death. By following this evidential trail - and observing his struggle to pin down observable differences in related metaphysical terms - the chapter contends that Best's classification of the unclassifiable has led to a Pākehā-inflected version of traditional spirituality being accepted as essential for Māori self-definition and understanding. This may be seen as an unintended consequence, but can nevertheless be shown as a result of his efforts.

Special attention will be given to the writing of post-1970 authors such as Maori Marsden, Cleve Barlow and Hirini Moko Mead, as shaping influences on modern day concepts of *tikanga* Māori (customs and practices) and *kaupapa* Māori. The midwifery of the historian Michael King in promoting a range of Māori views from 1975 onwards will conclude this etymological tracing. The aim of this approach is to test the theory of Best's influence, by isolating his work in this area during the late-colonial era of New Zealand history. This will structure an examination of what emerges in Māori writing

in the post-colonial, decolonising milieu (1945-1965), giving rise to present linguistic truisms concerning the meanings and ethnic purity of the by now essentialised concept of mauri.

The chapter follows Best's developing definition of a spiritual term - mauri - which has a vital place in contemporary Māori usage. It is argued that in the transfer of knowledge and practice from an oral to a literate form of preservation, the incantatory qualities bound up in such practices as karakia (efficacious chants and prayers) are either lost or so changed as to be unrecognisable. When the structure of a traditional society changes and breaks down with arrival of Christian literacy and ongoing colonisation, the meaning and practice of native religious rituals and forms undergo a radical metamorphosis. It is argued that the preservationist ethnographic project - by its very nature - is part of the doom facing the old ways. The past can never be saved - in the Zen sense of the impossibility of biting one's own teeth - and what Best recovered is more likely to resemble one of the ornithologist Walter Buller's stuffed huia, than the living bird. Any later native revivalist movement - with the inherent essentialising tendencies of post-colonial identity politics - has to take into account such changes to language and culture. This is especially true of attempts at recovering indigenous identity by retrieving supposed traditional concepts and practices from unexamined literary sources.

To argue that the colonisers have radically altered the traditional society in such a way that it needs resuscitation, without accepting there is no way back to pristine forms, is untenable. Attempting to write Best out of the record - or minimise his influence, without first assessing it - forces the ethnic essentialist to both deny the historical record and pretend that syncretism has no continuing influence.³ And finally, if counter-hegemonic theory is to be taken

³ An example of such Māori essentialism can be found in Marsden, where he argues that the "subjective reality" that Māori experience "is incapable of rational synthesis" by Pākehā. In particular, he objects to "the facile approach of foreign anthropologists" to Māori "attitudes, mores and values and the affective states of mind which produce them". (King, 1975, 218)

seriously, it should be seen for what it is: an attempt to wrest autonomy from Pākehā sources and interpretations. Revisionist views that deny or obscure Māori co-operation in the gathering and writing of these early records will ultimately prove unhelpful, and patronising towards Māori agency in the past, and the future.

Chapter 1: “New Zealand and the People Without History”.⁴

(a) Post-colonial Discourse Theory. (b) New Zealand Literature Review.

“The Maori himself will never record such data, will never preserve his own traditions; it remains for us to do it to the best of our ability.” (Best, 1924 (1974), xiv).

The aim of this two-part chapter is: in Part (a), to examine and compare models of colonial discourse theory: orientalism, alterity, subalternity, historicism and the role of syncretism in the collision of traditional societies with colonial modernity. What is the role of the theorist in affirming or undermining the possibility of indigenous agency? For example, is Said still relevant, or have Gellner’s charges of ahistoricity in Said’s evidences of orientalism rendered him passé? Does alterity theory load the projection of “otherness” onto colonising cultures alone? Has Eric Wolf made the case against local, anthropologised histories that need re-visioning through a critique of globalisation? Is Chakrabarty correct in saying pre-colonial societies were consigned to “the waiting room of history”, and developmental, historicist models still patronise their subjects in the “Third World”?

In Part (b), a review of historical commentary will expand into a theme-based structure, breaking down the general writings on issues in colonial representations and early anthropology, moving to more subject specific publications applicable to the New Zealand and Tuhoe situations. This will involve some reference to cognate areas, and a summary of the common knowledge; but more importantly, will identify gaps in the field concerning Best’s anthropology, positioning the contribution of this thesis. The

⁴ Apologies to Eric Wolf.

theoretical elements are broken down into international contributors - as in (a) above - moving on to focus on New Zealand writers such as Tony Ballantyne and Keith Sorrenson. Subject specific works - on the same model - include George Stocking on Victorian anthropology (general, international); Ballantyne, Sorrenson and Kerry Howe on the New Zealand, Pacific and imperial strands in colonial ethnography; articles and theses on Best and Tuhoe, including Sissons, Ballara and Reilly; and an overview of writers on the Māori renaissance, post-1970 such as King, Marsden and Mead.

Note on the use of Māori in this thesis: (methodology).

In a thesis concerned with power relationships between Māori and Pākehā, it is necessary to address the issue of language and power, specifically, the place of Māori in an English text.⁵ The thesis argues that Best's definitions of Māori spiritual terms distorted those concepts and re-imagined them; and through their incorporation in a major dictionary such as Williams Dictionary of the Māori Language, they have become a default mode for accessing "traditional" meanings. Best becomes a gatekeeper, and the dictionary is the boundary of the Māori linguistic estate.

In this text, both languages will be treated equally, in line with the aim of ensuring that while this disparity is acknowledged, there is a case for not treating Māori as a foreign language appearing in an English text, and therefore italicising it. This is not a pretence of scholarly objectivity, but a recognition that at the time Best was writing, there was no pristinity, but rather an inter-penetration of each culture by the other. The two languages were not static, but changing, in line with the cultural transformations occurring over his lifetime and that of Tutakangahau. The use of Māori in this English text does not therefore imply an unexamined assumption of equality in the power relationships of the cultures involved. Neither does it suggest

⁵ Macrons are used on Māori words in the English text to indicate vowel length, and only in quotes if the writer uses them. Following a convention established in the last 30 years, proper nouns are not macronised.

that Māori has been absorbed into New Zealand English; that the language and the society it springs from has never had an autonomous existence.

Postmodernism and colonial discourse theory:

If we regard Edward Said as the founder of what has become colonial discourse theory, then behind him lies his godfather, Michel Foucault. From Foucault Said derived the “notion of discourse” and he was first able “to identify Orientalism” (Said, 1979, 3). The productive power of such “saturating hegemonic systems like culture” was illustrated in the writings of Foucault, along with Gramsci and Raymond Williams (ibid., 14). In *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault examines transformations in historical knowledge, questioning all “teleologies and totalisations” (Foucault, 2002 (1969), 17). Understanding rhetoric and its relationship to power is to see its related discursive formations as “an obscure set of anonymous rules” (ibid., 231). He emphasises the impersonality of discursive structures: how men like Best were to some degree “authored” by the emerging discourse of anthropology, which was in turn driven by the Enlightenment discourse of progress. Such “history” was written from the perspective of a mythologising present, in order to fulfil its own needs. Best can be seen in this view as writing history in the mode of anthropology to fulfil the demands of colonial erasure: writing active, politicised Māori out of the script. “Authentic” Māori were disappearing, but their culture stage would prove retrievable for posterity if embalmed by the discourse of anthropology, a “science” empowered and legitimated by the hegemonic formations of a colonial progress. Cultural evolution was one such legitimating discourse.

Lechte, in his survey of post-WW2 thought, *Fifty Key Contemporary Thinkers: from structuralism to postmodernity* says that for Foucault, the present was always the shaper of the past: “The past, in short, takes on new meanings in light of new events” (Lechte, 1994, 110-115). History is “written in the light of current concerns”, which helps to explain the historical discontinuities that are predominant between various eras. Hospitals or

refuges for the “insane” became asylums; the knowledge of “mental illness” created its own power structure as the discourse grew in stature, and was increasingly linked to methods of social control in the technological era. For Foucault, “the prison becomes a tool of knowledge” (ibid., 114), in the same era as anthropology became a tool of government in colonial administrations. Yet theories do not necessarily explain practices: “theories...are themselves part of practices situated in a specific historical era” (ibid.). The provisionality of the interpretation of historical “evidence” is thus assumed, on the basis of its being shaped by present discursive formations, and the location of all theory as a specific historical practice - for example, the model of socio-cultural evolution that so influenced Best. The problem in all this is that Foucault - and Said - end by producing more of the same kind of “hegemonic, totalising, discursive formations” that are said to have maintained oppressive power in colonial dominions. For an overview of this development, a useful chapter by Washbrook opens the next section of this review.

Colonial Discourse Theory:

In “Orient and Occident: Colonial Discourse Theory and the Historiography of the British Empire” (1999), David Washbrook discusses Said’s influence and the 1970s rise of colonial discourse theory. Such theory has challenged Enlightenment narratives of science and progress, the “invented images” of imperial domination (‘caste’ and ‘tribe’), the “civilising mission of Christianity”, and the rise of resistance narratives: emancipation studies, or “history from below” as in Wolf’s seminal *Europe and the People without History* (1982). The related emergence of subaltern studies in the 1980s (Guha, Bhabha) he sees as an “attempt to restore a broad swathe of generically ‘subaltern’ orders to scholarly consciousness” (Washbrook, 1999, 601). This grew from a perceived need to subvert and challenge the ways in which “colonialists represented and constructed knowledges about their conquered subjects” (ibid., 599), exposing the ‘functioning of the Enlightenment episteme’ in such information gathering mediums as “censuses, ethnographies, land-settlement reports, museums”. In his view, this

proliferation of “discourse criticism percolated steadily into the historiography of imperialism over a considerable period through interdisciplinary contacts with anthropology” - its widest appeal awaiting the appearance of “Edward W. Said’s dazzling *Orientalism*” (ibid., 597). The study of Best which follows - a history of 19th century ideas - is influenced and guided by these theoretical developments, especially in the way it examines one of these so-called “Enlightenment epistemes”, ethnography, and the use of a form of subaltern studies, in an attempt to historicise Best’s Tuhoe informant, Tutakangahau.

In a case where the “subaltern” can no longer speak for themselves, it might be argued that a member or a descendant of that group should speak for them - which not the case in this thesis. The interlocutor here is by definition an inheritor of the benefits of an unjust colonial system; nor does this thesis attempt to “reinscribe” the past through a bogus attempt at presenting a Māori epistemology. Eschewing the “fragments” of subjective evidence favoured by post-modernist approaches, attempts are made to distinguish between fact and myth, in the conviction that empirical historical data does exist and needs to be debated from within the tradition of observable historical truth. Best lived and died, he wrote A+B, expressing the wish that those who came after him and cared about Māori traditions would re-examine and analyse the material he had collected.⁶ In Washbrook’s view, in the wake of colonial discourse theory (and its pedagogical offspring, Cultural Studies), “History, and above all the history of British imperialism, was forced to respond to a different intellectual agenda” (ibid., 603). As part of this response, history had challenged “the provenance of colonial discourse critique” in a number of major areas. Revelations by proponents of such critiques, of previously “hidden” passages in the historical record, were observed to “occlude” other larger passages that did not concur with such concepts as a consistency of European thought in relation to “the colonial ‘Other’ “.

⁶ See e.g. *Tuhoe*, (1925) p vi, para i.

The European narratives of the colonial “Other” were found to be far more complex and various, not all favouring the oppressor and vilifying the native subject, for example the writings of the missionary Richard Taylor in New Zealand (Owens, 2004). Washbrook sees problems in the reading of the “contribution of the Romantic movement” (there was more to Europe than the Enlightenment), not least the “reading of these qualities (of thought) backwards and forwards across the entire colonial (and European) experience leads to anachronism” (Washbrook, 1999, 603). There is also a readiness to collapse colonial differences, as if the “various parts” were not “distinct and discrete” (i.e., what might be true of India, specifically, Kashmir, could not be generalised to New Zealand, and the Chatham Islands). Such differences cannot be explained by continual reference to a monolithic European discourse, raising questions about “how far colonial discourse is intelligible, exclusively, in European terms” (ibid., 604). Colonial concepts such as “caste” and tribe were not solely the products of the coloniser’s imaginations, but rather “translations” of already existent formations in Indian and African society. There were always local markers of mutuality - and relations of power.

Best was described to this writer in 2004 by a Tuhoe educationalist as a “tāhae” (thief) and a “government agent”, because he “got his whakapapa from the Land Court minute books”. The speaker was unwilling to concede that over fifteen years, the Pākehā ethnographer was a unique representative of European power in the Urewera, and the powerful leaders of Tuhoe (such as Tutakangahau, and many others) sought him out, befriended him, and gave him this material freely (see Chapters 2, 6).⁷ Leaders will always talk to leaders, as diplomacy proves, especially when there is mutual advantage: “The power relations of colonialism were inextricably bound up with the power relations *between* the colonial subjects themselves” (604). The need for a viable history to adhere to a sensible empirical basis can hardly be in

⁷ Interview with anonymous informant, who has been approached for permission to use this material, but has not responded. July-August, 2004.

dispute: Best was on the side of the colonial elite, but he was also a unique individual with standards and values that make him an indispensable figure in our literary history. Tutakangahau was indisputably a Tuhoe leader and advocate against the appropriation of more Tuhoe lands; but he was also a thoughtful and self-interested local chief who saw that Best could record in writing what was being lost to oral transmission - the world of his 1830s childhood. A revisionism that distorts the motives of historical actors without clear evidence is just as patronising to the people of that time as any perceived racism underlying such encounters.

Washbrook contends that Europe cannot escape Europe: Foucault was in debt to Nietzsche and Derrida to Herder: colonial discourse theory's "occlusion of Romanticism...draws heavily on Romantic precepts itself". It ends "merely citing one of its own philosophical traditions against another" (ibid., 605). Viewing the "Romantically inspired emancipation of contemporary *post*-colonial society", he asks where it will lead - seemingly back towards constructs of community "formed by, or in relation to, colonial Orientalism itself". He sees this field's concept of a "finite, certain and objectified concept of culture" as coming close to reprising to 19th century concepts of fixed and objectified racial categories. What colonial discourse theory may be offering is less a *displacement* of "Enlightenment science than the *replacement* of its preferred categories of 'individual' and 'class' with those of 'culture' and 'race' " (ibid., 606). The European moves from the top to the bottom of what is still a (moral) hierarchy: Said is cited here as a principal culprit. His Orientalism is seen as "an 'Occidentalism', whereby his analysis of 'the West' follows precisely the same Enlightenment malpractice which he criticises in the latter's approaches to 'the East' " (ibid.). Said and his school are hoist with the petard of representations embedded in language and in institutions, "interwoven with a great many things besides 'the truth' " (Said, 1979, 272). The same must apply then to "*that* representation and *that* truth" (Washbrook, 1999, 607). This is said to be solipsistic: allied to the self-contradictions of using Foucault and Derrida to critique Enlightenment epistemology, then "discarding their 'politics' to return to the Enlightenment-

inspired...Gramsci and Raymond Williams", Said's critique cannot reject the Enlightenment "without silencing itself" (ibid).

Washbrook criticises colonial discourse theory's privileged knowledges, such as Spivak's defence of "strategic essentialism" which aims to empower the marginalised and the victims.⁸ In focussing inquiry "once again, on Europeans" or a limited number of "colonial subjects...in relations of cultural dominance and resistance with them", the majority are occluded in "a reversion back to an elitist historiography"⁹ (ibid., 608). The shift from 'social' to 'cultural' history, in this analysis, seems more to do with the angst of a diasporic intelligentsia, than a real concern for a contemporary downtrodden peasantry: "colonial discourse theorists themselves come from upper-status or middle-class groups among the once-colonised". Citing Aijaz Ahmad (1994), Washbrook argues that "colonialism's most trenchant critics are its chief beneficiaries". Located predominantly in the West - as was Said - Ahmad claims that such theorists actually benefit from the multiculturalist ethos and the rhetoric of "victimisation"; more, that they authorise themselves to speak for societies they have left behind, creating "a new mechanism of imperialism in an age of multicultural, globalized capitalism"(ibid., 609). Dipesh Chakrabarty - whose work will be examined shortly - receives special attention for the way in which concepts such as "community" and "hierarchy" in his work "obscure relations of exploitation" and "legitimise certain forms of domination as functions of 'traditional' and 'local' authority"¹⁰ (ibid., 608).

This analysis of the state of contemporary colonial discourse theory ends by outlining the use of Bakhtin's dialogic principle (the contribution of the colonised culture to the coloniser's own) and the syncretisms involved in 'hybridity' and 'Creolity'. He sees an emphasis on the interplay of meanings

⁸ See "Criticism, Feminism and the Institution", *Thesis Eleven*, 10/11 (1984/1985).

⁹ This study will attempt to avoid that kind of emphasis in relation to Māori and Pākehā in the period under consideration.

¹⁰ In S. Basu, "Workers, Politics in Bengal, 1890-1929", unpublished PhD thesis, Cambridge, 1994.

“implied by the concept of dialogue”, both in the post-modern dissonances of Bhabha, and the “Enlightenment sense”, suggesting “effective syncretisms and cross-cultural rationalisations” (ibid., 609). Many voices, speaking from many positions “marked by finely graded differentials of power” sound from complex colonial situations (this is amply illustrated by the relationship of Best and his Tuhoe informants, as will be seen in Chapter 6). His most trenchant objection to a universal, monolithic “Orientalist” voice - as opposed to such nuanced dialogues - is the image that “the epistemics of science, universalism, liberty, modernity and progress” were generated by and unique to Europe and the Enlightenment, is an ethnocentric distortion. Concepts basic to science had come in the first place from “the Orient”, as well as those from religion, philosophy and history (ibid., 610). He looks to a re-authorisation of non-binary principles of “Reason and Freedom”:

In shattering Europe’s monolithic conceits, dialogics may come to offer a more far-reaching critique of European world-centrality and dominance than discourse theory ever managed. (ibid)

It will be a primary aim of this study to find voices in its central characters that show how dialogue produced knowledge, as Bakhtin contended: “All else is means; dialogue is the end. A single voice ends nothing and resolves nothing. Two voices is the minimum for life.”¹¹

Edward Said:

Since the publication of his *Orientalism* in 1979, Said has become the father figure of postcolonial theory. “Discourse criticism percolated steadily into the historiography of imperialism [through] interdisciplinary contacts with anthropology...[and had its] widest appeal [in] literary theory and the publication in 1978 of Edward Said’s dazzling *Orientalism*” (Washbrook, 1999, 596-597). Utilising Derrida on textual deconstruction and Foucault on systems of domination and the relationship of power to knowledge, Said set out a basis for colonial discourse theory based on the Western representation

¹¹ Quoted in Gardiner 1992: 25. *The dialogics of critique: M.M. Bakhtin & the theory of ideology*. London: Routledge.

of an Oriental “Other”. Said has differed with Foucault on the issue the relative importance of the “individual text or author” (Said, 1979, 23). His “analyses employ close textual readings whose goal is to reveal the dialectic between individual text or writer and the complex collective formation to which his work is a contribution” (ibid., 23-24). A similar technique will be employed in this study, with an eye to Gellner’s critique, that Said’s methods subject historical nuance to his overriding thesis, and he overreaches his disciplinary powers thereby (Gellner, 1993). In a review of *Culture and Imperialism*, Gellner accused Said himself of “Orientalism”, in that he had disregarded “the concrete realities of Algeria” and indulged himself in “a kind of metaphysical projection of an abstract theme” (ibid., 3). Gellner’s charge that Said is orientalisising his subjects succinctly restates Said’s position: that Orientalist writing ignores the everyday realities in the area or region described, as writers projects material absorbed from culture and discourse onto the subject, distorting the image of the subject’s quotidian, historical realities. Said’s basic positions - in considering Best’s work - are as follows. That: i) the Orientalist “makes the Orient speak”, ignorant and careless of the agency of the stereotyped subject (Said, 1979, 23); ii) that the West was projecting itself onto other cultures, Occidental representations owing more to Western discursive modes than “a distant and amorphous Orient” (ibid., 21-22); and iii) that while a mostly imaginary Orient “provoked a writer to his vision, it very rarely guided it. (ibid., 23). Responding to Said’s general critique at this point, how does it match the details of Best’s career and output? The following discussion looks at Best’s work through the lens of Said’s Orientalism, as a way of indicating the critic’s method and its application.

In “making the Orient speak”, Said posits a Western ‘expert’ ventriloquising for those assumed to be incapable of accurately giving an account of themselves. Was this true for Best and other members of the Polynesian Society? Best was certainly a good model for that now unfashionable creature, the “Pākehā expert”, but was he blind to reality in the way Said suggests a typical Orientalist is? Best was fluent in Māori, and assiduously

sought out local Māori informants throughout his career. However, this knowledge and sympathy does not mean he was not an “Orientalist”: it also gave him the tools to do more damage. He was certainly no distant observer: he carried out his extensive fieldwork under arduous conditions, which he apparently relished.

The comforts of life surround one here by city streets, but the graceless Bohemian mind wheels regretfully back to the 6 x 8 tent, the far-spread forest, the brown-skinned friends, the life that men live. *E! Aku ra ki tua!* (My bygone days!) (Best, 1924b, xi).

He was well aware of his shortcomings in terms of cultural ignorance, and the need for humility (Craig, 1964, 67-69). Far from inventing his sources, or acquiring them second-hand, Best’s whole intention was to gain the confidence of Māori so they would tell him their histories, traditions and myths. He spent the last twenty years of his life preparing his field research for publication, and disseminating accounts of neolithic culture in New Zealand. Best was not an academic Orientalist, but in discovering anthropology, he saw a door to advancement and the respect of peers at home and abroad. In publishing, he also enlarged his original field notes with a variety of dubious speculations, to be examined in detail later.

This Best does not seem an ideal model for Said’s complaint; yet there are aspects of his thinking, and his position in the society of the time, that accord with the Orientalist figure. Best clearly took the stance of the elegist over Māori culture: he mourned the passing of an idealised, old time Māori, vanishing like the moa, after fulfilling “his task in forming the mysterious chain of progress of which no man may count the links” (Best, 1923, 28). Best exoticised Māori, and distanced them from those aspects of modernity they had embraced from earliest contact : “He is not of us, nor yet of our time; he [the Māori] is the Oriental mystic; he is a survival from a past age.” (ibid). Pre-Treaty period accounts, such as those of Frederick Maning, give some indication of just how radically Māori society had been changed, post-contact, and how reified were Best’s conceptions of Tuhoe and other Māori (Maning, 1912 (1863), 189-202).

This romanticism, allied with an extinctionist, evolutionary frame of reference, does to some degree fit Said's charge of speaking for the Other – silencing them by speaking for, or about them. Best's brand of "urgent anthropology" was of a piece with that of the early American anthropologist Lewis Henry Morgan (1818-1881) who likewise had lived amongst an indigenous people (the Iroquois), and had foreseen the destruction of their culture in the face of large-scale European immigration (Eriksen, 2001, 18). Best was also concerned to link Māori with an Asiatic/Semitic origin: why was this and what freight he was bringing to the encounter? To what extent was Best aware of and influenced by the anthropological concerns and debates of his time? Was he part of what Kuper has described as the "distorting mirror" of a modern society looking backwards to understand itself by inventing a primitive template, "on the assumption that modern society had evolved from its antithesis" (Kuper, 1988, 5)? This will be addressed in Chapter 2 and elsewhere in the study.

With regard to the projection Western ideas and values onto Māori, a leading Māori thinker of Best's latter days, Te Rangi Hiroa (Sir Peter Buck) had this to say:

All these other native cultures are being worked out by pakehas with all the drawbacks that they have as regards language and view point. Kua mutu haere te wa kia te Peehi ma, kua riro ma taua ma te Maori taua e korero.¹² It is left to us to straighten up what has been written by our pakeha pioneers and to carry on the work in intensive detail (Sorrenson, 1987, 115).

Sir Peter Buck, writing to Sir Apirana Ngata in 1931, a few months prior to Best's death, encapsulates the problem of metaphysical projection. While he does not reject out of hand the work of "our pakeha pioneers", he is quite clear that limitations of language and culture introduce problems of accurate

¹² "The time of Best and that crowd is coming to an end. It is left for us, the Maori, to speak about ourselves." Letter from Buck to Ngata, 10th February, 1931 (Translation given as footnote).

perception, which the Māori inheritors of this early anthropology would need to “straighten up”. There is a clear message here: no matter how deep in the language and culture Pākehā might become, in the end they were not Māori, and Māori had to speak for themselves. That “intensive detail” implied getting things right, and carrying on the discipline without European interference. Māori were to represent Māori, “tāua e kōrero” (it is for us to speak).¹³ Chapter 7 will discuss issues relating to Buck’s position in trying to examine Māori culture and values inside what was essentially a European discursive mode.

In Said’s terms, the Orientalist recreates the Oriental not just by speaking from inside his own language and culture, and filtering his perceptions through unconscious norms; but also through “techniques of representation” that “rely upon institutions, traditions, conventions, and agreed-upon codes of understanding for their effects, not upon a distant and amorphous Orient” (Said, 1979, 22). He cites the example of early European linguists discovering the Indo-European language system that came to be known as Aryan (ibid); an example of how a powerful discourse of origins was to evolve into a system of racial difference and national identity. This met a perceived need in evolving European nationalisms in the early 1800s and onwards, and “came to symbolise an idea close to the hearts of European states – that a separate language indicated a separate racial/national origin” (B. a. P. Ashcroft, A., 1999, 52). This search for origins in language relationships was to emerge in the New Zealand context in the work of Edward Tregear. Tregear’s resort to the emerging discipline of European philology in order to locate Māori origins and thus prove their kinship to Europeans, is an example of what Said’s is critiquing: the “evidence” came as much from the Western academy, and

¹³ This is not to suggest that when Māori did “speak” on their own behalf, they could be entirely free of the influence of “Best and that crowd”. When Buck gained entrance to the Pākehā realm of anthropology, his position was ambivalent. He also had to write in the language of the scientific man, measuring the heads of returning Māori servicemen on a troopship in 1919 after the Great War, in the anthropological fashion of the time (Buck, 1949, 66-67).

from Tregear's egalitarian ideals, as it did from Māori history, traditions, language, and any archaeological findings.

Encircling Africa, the two vast horns of the Great Migration have touched again; and men whose fathers were brothers on the other side of those gulfs of distance and time meet each other, when the Aryan of the West (*Pākehā*) greets the Aryan of the Eastern Seas (*Māori*) (Tregear, 1885, 105, *italic inserts mine*).

While Tregear's fraternal aims may have been laudable, his research methods and findings were not, and were promptly debunked by the Cambridge linguist, Sidney Ray, in the Polynesian Society's journal (Sorrenson, 1992, 42). The notion of shared Anglo-Māori ancestry was to prove enduring, as was cultural likeness, where Māori become versions of Pākehā. The "Brown Briton" category was appearing in school text-books as late as the 1940s: "indeed, Māori and Briton are not unlike in many ways" (Anon., 192-, 48).

In Best's case too, there was a genuine desire to locate Māori in both historical and geographical lineage, coupled with a propensity to psychologize their spiritual temperament, within a developmental model of human religious behaviour. Fitting Māori into universal patterns, and a narrative of human progress while describing their unique variations, was part of Best's attempt to ground his work in a scientific model of Linnaean classification. At the same time he left himself free to speculate and air convictions beyond the scope of scientific enquiry. His investigations of the Io teachings are a case in point, and have been widely canvassed. The contention that a superior level of myth was known and transmitted by select few was challenged by Williams and Hammond, who believed "the Io religion had been concocted in the 1860s by mission-trained Māori, and that Io was in fact one of the contractions of Jehovah." (Sorrenson, 1992, 38). Best and his colleague Percy Smith held to their diffusionist stance. Sounding a little like Tregear above, Best wondered aloud "Has the name of Jehovah been carried westward, and that of Io eastward, from a common centre, to meet here at the bounds of the earth?" (Best, 1924b, 90). He states that an old Māori tradition (unsourced) names two primal gods, "Io and Ha. Oriental scholars tell us that Ea, or Ia, or Aa, was

identified with Ya, Yau, or Au, the Jah of the Hebrew" (ibid). This leads in the direction of a Palestinian inheritance for Māori, locating Best in the line of missionary ethnography he despised. In the context of this passage, Best free-associates on the basis of Ernest Renan's remark in his *History of the People of Israel*, "The holy name became contracted to Iahou or Io." (cited in Best, ibid). It likely one of the Oriental scholars Best refers to is in fact the same Renan (who comes in for detailed examination by Said, as an early Orientalist par excellence). Best's uncritical propositions on philological links between the languages and the peoples involved is indicative of the desire of the Polynesian Society members to link the New World with the Old, and to give their own researches the gloss of academic respectability (Said, 1979, 123-148). Best's acquaintance with the writings of men such as Renan will form part of the following chapter, on his intellectual influences.¹⁴

If Best's vision of Māori was shaped by such projections, was it simply using them as fuel for an imaginative recreation, as Said also charges: "At the most, the 'real' Orient provoked the writer to his vision; it very rarely guided it." (ibid., 22)? Best recorded a vast amount of material, and much of the day-to-day matter of Māori life he set down was accurate and valuable. However, in the area of metaphysical speculation, and the attempt to access an essentialised and pristine model of the pre-European past, he can be seen attempting to meet his own needs for a spiritual model. He was well aware that what the ethnographic observer uses as a lens will clarify or distort the images produced.

A careful examination of the evidence shows us that everything depends upon the point of view, which hinges upon the mentality and enlightenment of the observer, his possession or otherwise of the critical

¹⁴ Renan's crisis of religious faith, according to Said, had led him into a life of scholarship, specifically philology – as the inheritor of a discipline that had rejected the divine origin of language (Hebrew), and discovered instead a parent language (Sanskrit), in a universal system of language 'families': "For the linguist, language cannot be pictured as the result of force emanating unilaterally from God." (ibid., 136) It is the search by Best for links to this proto-language, and the theorising about Māori origins as a result of inferred linguistic relationships, that place him within this department of the 19th century Orientalist discourse.

faculty, his prejudices, and the length and nature of his sojourn among the people under discussion... (Best, 1924a, 7).

He knew the value of evidence, but is clear that this was used to make a certain case, dependent upon the limitations of the observer's viewpoint: that no-one can simply be an observer without participation. While he may have wished to distance himself from the various 19th century missionary views on Māori, and from European Christian worldviews in general, he faced the same challenge as did all who tried to fill the vacuum left by this rejection.

In attempting to find a superior level of esoteric spirituality amongst Māori, Best was led into believing the contentious idea that there remained an informant amongst them, by the 1890s, whose religious thinking had not been influenced by that missionary culture, and the power of biblical literacy to reshape Māori thought and society. Best may have been able to ignore the religious syncretisms of Pai Mairire (Hauhau), Ringatu, and Rua Kenana, on the basis that he was salvaging the distant past for posterity – but we cannot ignore the problem of influence. Best knew Kenana, who he calls “my very worthy friend”, and gives an account of his attempts to banish Europeans and perform other miracles based “upon Christian teachings” – calling Rua “the ‘New Messiah’” (Best, 1924b, 127). It is scarcely believable that he was able to access a Māori past that had not somehow metamorphosed in the process of colonisation and settlement – that his informants had kept Christian influences locked in one department of their lives, and the pre-European world in another.

His point about the “length and nature of [the observer's] sojourn” is worth pursuing. Mere time in itself means little, but informed time is different: time spent living with Māori close to, or on their papakāinga (homeland); speaking Māori; building friendships; recording information over a long period. All this Best did in the Urewera, while remaining a Pākehā official, employed to see the roading work was completed, and acting as secretary to the Commission overseeing the Urewera District Native Reserve, set up in 1896 (Craig, 1964, 90). He was both an agent of the land-hungry European majority and at times,

an advocate for Tuhoe as well, in their boundary disputes. Those Māori who became his informants were those who wanted to talk to him – presumably those who wanted to have some relationship with Pākehā power through one of its official representatives. We know some of what they told him –and what was missed or withheld, is lost. In approaching Best, we have no way of knowing how pristine these stories were, what the informants edited, or simply did not consider important, or worthy to relate. All we have is what Best has left us, and his interpretations of that material.¹⁵ What then becomes relevant are his motives for the kinds of interpretation employed. To listen to Best quoting Oliver Wendell Holmes is instructive:

We know a good deal about the earth on which we live. But the study of man has been so completely subjected to our preconceived opinions that we have got to begin all over again. We have studied anthropology through theology; now we have to begin with the study of theology through anthropology (Best, 1924a, 16).

This statement is crucial to understanding Best's efforts to separate traditional Māori society from Christian interpretations, and to attempt a view of pre-contact culture that sees it more "as it was", or even more unlikely, as it saw itself. In a desire to rid local anthropology of "distortions" by ministers of revealed religion, he used his material as a club to beat the missionaries. Best wanted science – and social scientists like himself - in charge of the material.

In attempting to reject a Christian anthropology, Best was a child of his times. A biblical view of man existed virtually unchallenged until the mid-19th century: degenerationist, post-lapsarian, involving a fall, a banishment and scattering, a confusion of tongues, culminating in divine intervention via salvation, eschatology and judgement. The secular model embraced by Best was progressivist: Enlightenment reason replaced religious superstition in the advances of civilisation, scientific method displacing faith and belief. However, his later views of Māori seem strongly influenced by an offshoot of American Puritan theology, the transcendentalist doctrines propounded by

¹⁵ See discussion of Best by Tuhoe leaders (2005) later in Part (b) of this chapter.

Emerson and the descendants of New England Unitarianism. This is especially the case in Best's interpretation of Māori nature worship and the cult of Io. Best's hope of a pure anthropology - the study of man, free of theology - was naïve and compromised from the outset. He embodies 19th century developments in anthropological views, in particular where a theistic paradigm attempts to accommodate the findings and challenges of evolutionary thinking. Best wanted to replace the distorting mirror of missionary Christianity with an alternative, scientific anthropology. He emerges in this study as another kind of theist, with his the romantic and transcendentalist constructions of man, nature and society. Whatever contradictions this entailed, he managed them by compartmentalising competing discourses.

The "Māori genius for personification" (as seen in their anthropomorphic mythology) was "a survival from the Mythopoetic Age", the "childhood of the human race" (Best, 1922, 9). Māori could be studied profitably to show civilised man the stages from which he had emerged. Best took his spirituality and moral sense from the "subtle teachings of Nature". (ibid., 22) He believed that Māori, while not as receptive to the Earth Mother's teachings as European romantics, were so deeply impressed by their observations of her actions that they created a complete cosmonogy from their mythopoetic genius, deriving all the necessary imagery from observations of natural phenomena. It was a short leap from there to "the surprising concept of the Supreme Being, who as Emerson puts it, spoke to them through Nature" (Best, 1920, 5). If this is not a form of theology, then it is an interesting question as to what point it becomes anthropology. In Said's framework, Best's views of religion have certainly "provoked [him] to his vision" and influenced his handling of the evidence.

In his second major work on Orientalist discourses, *Culture and Imperialism* (1994), Said moves from Western representations of the Orient in non-fiction to examining the place of colonial types and situations in canonical works of fiction, from Austen to Camus et al. He is employing Foucault's idea of various pasts, shaped by present culture throughout all imperial eras: "how

we formulate or represent the past shapes our understanding of the present” (Said, 1994, 2). Culture - as in writing fiction, for example - has had a privileged role in the “modern imperial experience”. Literature may be imperial propaganda, and those like Edmund Spenser who had “bloodthirsty plans for Ireland” cannot have his “poetic achievement” properly assessed with no account taken of his imperial ideology¹⁶ (ibid., 5). The issue for this study is whether early anthropology as practised by Best and his peers in late 19th century New Zealand created its own fictions to sustain this imperial project (e., the “old time Māori” and his “mythopoetic mentality”).

There were scholars, administrators, travellers, traders, parliamentarians, merchants, novelists, theorists, speculators, adventurers, visionaries, poets and every variety of outcast and misfit in the outlying possessions of these two imperial powers [France and England], each of whom contributed to the formation of a colonial actuality existing at the heart of metropolitan life (ibid., 8).

Said continued his critique of Western misrepresentations through a series of books and journal articles until his death in 2003. He attracted a host of critics - such as Ernest Gellner - who attacked his relativistic attitudes and poor historical scholarship. In “Orientalism Reconsidered” (1985), from *Reflections on Exile* (2001), Said rebuts Gellner’s charge of ahistoricity. He sees historicism as one of Orientalism’s “epistemological foundations...one of the legacies of Orientalism...is historicism [which holds that...if humankind has a history...[it possesses] a complex but coherent unity” (Said, 2001, 209). This one uniting historical narrative was from “the vantage point of Europe or the West”. What Europe did not see or document was “therefore, ‘lost’ until, at some later date, it too could be incorporated by the new sciences of anthropology, political science and linguistics” (ibid., 210). The growth of “world history”, the work of Braudel and Wolf et al, as authored by this school, is ideologically opposed to imperialism, but without in Said’s view, paying enough attention to “those cultural practices, like Orientalism and

¹⁶ Gellner reviewed *Culture and Imperialism* in 1993. See *Times Literary Supplement*, “The Mightier Pen” (Gellner, 1993, 3-4). Discussed under Gellner, below ff.

ethnography, affiliated with imperialism, which in genealogical fact fathered world history itself" (ibid). Historicism is "universalising and self-validating". (Said, 2001, 211) The issue of a European historical paradigm will be more fully examined shortly in a discussion of Chakrabarty's views (2000).

Said also mentions here Asad's and Hobsbawn's work (ibid., 213). Asad - writing before Said's emergence - saw a fundamental denial as having occurred: the "professional anthropologists" refusing to "seriously consider the power structure" in which their discipline had taken shape (Asad, 1998 (1973), 15). This was a precursor to Said "speaking truth to power". Asad claimed anthropology was rooted in the unequal power relationships in which it grew and flowered. Said ends this 1985 article with a call to a "a clarified political and methodological commitment to the dismantling of systems of domination". Adopting Gramsci, he writes that they must be "collectively fought, by mutual siege, war of manoeuvre, *and* war of position" (Said, 2001, 215). Hobsbawn and Ranger, while more measured, have also been influential in reassessing how traditions and images of empire come into being. *The Invention of Tradition* (1984) is a series of essays illustrating the central idea that often what may be taken for long established tradition has been "invented" or adapted more recently, in line with Foucault's observation that the needs of the present often dictate the shape of the past. As history by definition is always written or told post-facto, days or centuries later, it is inevitable the historical moment of the writing or telling will reshape the view of the past. In Hobsbawn's views, this phenomenon, inventing "a set of practices...rules...ritual and symbolic behaviour" is an attempt "to establish continuity with a suitable historic past" (Hobsbawn and Ranger, 1983, 1). All communities, national or local "include a constructed or 'invented' component" (ibid., 14); in the case of Best and his attempts to reconstruct the Māori past, and the nature of Māori being, all of the above apply to his search for "the old-time Māori". Hobsbawn expanded his comments further a decade later, warning of the abuses of history and the responsibilities of professional

historians; he saw myth and invention as essential to the politics of identity¹⁷ (Hobsbawm, 1993, 62-64).

World History:

The next major theorist with application to this thesis is Eric Wolf, in his *Europe and the People Without History* (1982, 1997). This takes the form of a Marxist challenge to make anthropology more answerable to history. Wolf describes the literary construction of various 'primitive' peoples as "without history" (4), in meta-narratives of "unfolding moral purpose" - such as "civilised Progress" - as opposed a multiplicity of social and cultural processes, nuanced in time and place (Wolf, 1982 (1997), 5). Colonial anthropology he sees as part of a process that "telescoped...a teleological understanding" of human development in such a way as to shoehorn indigenous peoples - such as Māori - into artificial models that met the needs of the colonisers. According to Wolf, by turning "names into things we create false models of reality" (ibid., 6). Endowing other cultures "with the qualities of internally homogenous and externally distinctive and bounded objects, we create a model of the world as a global pool hall", as if solid entities were colliding. (ibid) The Kiplingesque trope of Best's day, "East is East and West is West", and the Third World (of our own) are forms of what Said describes as orientalisms.

For Wolf, the critical turning point is identifiable "in the middle of the past [19th] century, when inquiry into the nature and varieties of humankind split into separate (and unequal) specialities and disciplines" (ibid., 7). This critique, as it relates to Best, goes on to say that these studies "turned the ideological reason for that split into an intellectual justification for the

¹⁷ "The past is an essential element in these [nationalist, ethnic or fundamentalist] ideologies" (ibid., 62-63). "The most usual ideological abuse of history is based on anachronism rather than lies" (ibid., 63). "Myth and invention are essential to the politics of identity [by which groups of people] try to find some certainty in an uncertain and shaking world by saying, 'We are different from and better than the Others'" (ibid., 64).

specialities themselves" (ibid). Wolf's prime example is sociology and the development of sociological theory - and for this study - the rise of anthropology (ibid., 13-19). He has no objection to "the anthropological insight that human existence entails the creation of cultural forms" linked to symbols (ibid., 18); yet sees anthropology as "trapped...inside the bounds of its own definitions" with concepts of "autonomous, self-regulating and self-justifying" social and cultural groupings (ibid). Wolf argues that a "world of upheaval and change" defeats the efforts of sociologists seeking patterns of social order and integration; and similarly, "anthropologists look for *pristine replicas* [mine] of the pre-capitalist, pre-industrial past in the sinks and margins of the capitalist, industrial world" (ibid). This applies to Best, inasmuch as he too searched for a pristine Māori psychology in a world turned upside down: "without imperialism there would be no anthropologists" (ibid). Best's eventual impatience with entangled Tuhoe histories, and his search for esoteric lore instead, accords with this analysis.¹⁸

The tacit anthropological supposition that people like these are without history amounts to the erasure of 500 years of confrontation, killing, resurrection and accommodation...anthropology all too frequently operates with its mythology of the pristine primitive. [It] perpetuates fictions that deny the facts of ongoing relationships and involvements (ibid).

The work of historians and anthropologists characterised as "ethnohistory" is in Wolf's view less "their" history than "our" history - that all societies are open, linked "with other aggregates, near and far, in weblike, netlike connections"¹⁹ (ibid., 19). He calls for "a new theory of cultural forms", and to address this, examines the continued relevance of Marx to this debate:

¹⁸ See discussion on the writing of *Tuhoe* in Chapter 2. Best wrote to Percy Smith in 1905, "I do not think it would do to mix up accounts of petty tribal wars with matter purely ethnographical. The latter is interesting to anthropologists but not so the former which is of local interest only and only to few." (8.9.05) MS-Papers-7888-024, ATL.

¹⁹ Citing Alexander Lesser (1961:42). Ballantyne (1, 2002) also cites Wolf as a foundational thinker for his "webs of empire" metaphor that structures *Orientalism and Race* (see following sections on 19th century anthropology, and the New Zealand writers).

political economy and class have been “expunged...from the repertory of the social sciences”, which have turned away from “crucial questions about the nature of production, class and power” (ibid., 20). Wolf sees Marx as a disowned ghost in the social science of the 1980s, reclaiming him as “neither a universal historian, nor a historian of events, but a historian of configurations, or syndromes of material relationships” (ibid., 21). Marx is a vital teacher in understanding the “present world” of market globalisation; for theories of “growth and development”; and our ability to “relate both the history and theory” of such development “to processes that affect and change the lives of local populations” (ibid.). In the case of Māori trade, religion and literacy, and the capital developments of land sale and confiscation, were all part of wider global movements in the nineteenth century. Ethnographers like Best could not afford to ignore this, as they looked back through such cultural changes in an attempt to gauge what life was like for Māori before the Pākehā came.

As exemplars of such a necessary theorisation, he offers the economist André Gunder Frank, and the economic historian, Immanuel Wallerstein. Frank outlines the “development of underdevelopment”: mercantile centres exploiting and making dependent satellite peripheries. Wallerstein charts the development of a “European world-economy” (today styled as globalisation), where in Frank’s “centre”, goods are “produced mainly by ‘free’ wage-renumerated labour; in the periphery goods are produced mainly by one kind or another of coerced labour” (ibid., 22). Best noted examples of this: the wage labour of landless Māori shearers and shedhands went into the production of wool for Britain and the making of fortunes for the settler runholders and farmers.²⁰ He did not note these forces as agents of change, except as examples of a beneficent Progress; their impact on the matrix of his anthropology was virtually ignored, save as a goad to preserve what was passing away. For Frank and Wallerstein, Wolf argues, “the principal aim was to understand how the core subjugated the periphery, and not to study

²⁰ “...young men of Tuhoe have for many years...[been] migrating to Hawke’s Bay and elsewhere, in order to obtain employment at sheep-shearing”. “The Present Condition of Tuhoe-land”, *The Press*, Christchurch, 1897.

the reactions of the micro-populations habitually investigated by anthropologist" (ibid., 23). They pointed to the "wider linkages" to be investigated "if the processes in the periphery are to be understood"; how first peoples - including Māori - "were drawn into the larger system to suffer its impact and to become its agents".

Here lies the problem for Best in his day: he maintained that theories of cultural evolution and material progress liberated the human mind from "superstition" (i.e., religion). Yet the theories were also tools in the processes of globalisation, and not hard science. His examination of a Tuhoe micro-population ignored or was blind to the linkages Wolf posits. To this degree, his anthropology was a legitimator of - and legitimated by - settler domination and the rise of global, industrial capitalism. Wolf's relevance to this study is to "trace the transition to capitalism in the course of the industrial revolution" and the examination of "its impact on areas of the world supplying resources to the industrial centres". While not undertaking here an economic history of Māori, it is important to frame Best's search for pristinity as taking place inside a Māori world transformed by the forces of globalisation. Turning to New Zealand, we can apply Wolf's "[sketching] out of the formation of working classes and their migrations within and between continents" (ibid). This encompassed both settlers (e.g. Best's family) and Māori themselves, as through processes of hoko and raupatu (land sale and confiscation), rural retreat and poroporoaki (leave taking, or as used here, a quickening internal migration from the country to the town), their culture changed and adapted, to survive military defeat and settler swamping. Best's search for some form of pre-contact Māori being was compromised always by a changed and changing Māori and Pākehā world.

Wolf also presents a challenge to the "primitive survivals" thesis so central to Best's motives and methods. He contends that the momentous changes ensuing from a rapidly expanding process of globalisation from the 1400s onwards - accelerating in the 19th century particularly - "constituted *their* history as well", that of the so-called primitives (ibid., 385). The are "no

‘contemporary ancestors’, no people without history, no peoples - to use Levi-Strauss’ s phrase - whose histories have remained ‘cold’ “ (ibid). In demonstrating and explaining their global connections, Wolf insists that these cannot be explained unless “grounded in economic and political conditions” - in his case, analysed with “concepts taken from the storehouse of Marxian ideas” (ibid., 386). Best was overtly hostile to the notion of the survival of an authentic Māori being transformed by any mode of political and economic agency. He narrowed his focus to ignore the changes colonial systems and the settler economy had made in the hearts and minds of his informants. His views on Rua Kenana - the keka (madman) - exemplify an inability to cope with those Māori who managed change in such a way as to put themselves beyond the control of the government, and Best himself.²¹ Chapter 6, which examines the relationship of Best and a major Tuhoe informant, Tutakangahau, attempts to balance the image of the Maungapohatu leader, setting him in the political and economic arenas of his day with reference to his letters and other writings in the public record.

Best was looking to retrieve a cultural record from a vanished society that had in any case no concept of “culture” as it was articulated in the 19th century discourse of anthropology. Wolf, referencing Marx, says “men make their own history but not under relationships of their own choosing. They do so under the constraint of relationships and forces that direct their will and their desires” (ibid). By the time Best arrived in the Urewera in 1895, the “kin-ordered mode” of production was already enmeshed in the “capitalist mode”, in an example of the inter-connectedness of which Wolf speaks. He says this demands a revision of “the concept of culture”: there is no logical correlative between the concept of an emerging nation and its animation “by [a] special spirit and culture”. In reality, societies are always changing, “imperfectly bounded” and the concept of “a fixed, unitary, and bounded culture must give way to a sense of the fluidity and permeability of cultural sets” (ibid., 387). However stable - or fluid - traditional Māori society may have been,

²¹ See Chapter 6 on Tutakangahau, Rua Kenana, and the chapter appendix.

anthropological practice in the 19th century failed to take account of the global forces Wolf describes. The emerging discipline was unable to provide a process model that could dissect and nuance change, outside of the monolithic Tylolean socio-cultural pyramid: savage, barbarian, and civilisation.

A dissenting view of the Said and Wolf versions of colonial history is given by Ernest Gellner - the *bête noire* of the Orientalist relativists. A fierce critic of the 'literary turn' in anthropology from the 1980s onwards, he claims there are now three "ways of knowing", or basic intellectual positions: fundamentalist religiosity, post-modern relativism and Enlightenment rationalism (Rapport, 2000, 300-301). He adheres firmly to the latter, attacking the Wittgenstein philosophy of language that underlies post-modern linguistic relativism, which sees facts and generalisations as being "tools of colonial domination" (ibid). In *Postmodernism, reason and religion*, he continues to insist that knowledge beyond culture is made possible by the existence of science, and its forms of knowledge, which all cultures are now forced to come to terms with (Gellner, 1992). Ignoring the effects of the scientific revolution makes the relativist blind to the fact that "Valid knowledge ignores and does not engender frontiers". Gellner wants anthropology to explain why science has succeeded in some domains and not others (Gellner, 1995, 6-8). This has underlying echoes of the old primitive versus civilised debate that Best sought to rationalise with his "science of anthropology". Gellner's vehement critique of post-modernism insists that moral relativism has swung the pendulum so far away from racialised anthropologies that it has lost any moorings in hard science and empirical data (Rapport, 2000, ibid 300). In Gellner's view, by adopting a crusading persona, critics such as Said lose perspective, ignore uncomfortable historical data, overstep their disciplinary expertise, and lack any form of ironic detachment. In *Anthropology and Politics: Revolutions in the Sacred Grove*, (1995) he states the need to re-evaluate the debates over anthropology and history without recourse to Marxist idealism. He defends Malinowski against post-modern relativism: "We need neither pretend that we have no history, nor revere it as a cosmic judge and taskmaster. [...] The

dominant style of inquiry into *nations without a history* [mine] was devised by a member of a nation [Malinowski, a Pole] with a history too painful to be seen as providential" (101).

Whether Gellner is correct in bewailing the cross-disciplinary *mélange* that has emerged from literary criticism, historical commentary and anthropology into what is loosely called cultural studies, it remains necessary for any study of colonial history to examine what present social and cultural anthropology have to say about 19th century anthropology and its consequences. What Said and his heirs have bequeathed in three major areas will now be considered: alterity theory (representing the Other); the Unhomely (Bhabha's description of the displaced colonised subject, hybridised and alienated); and a critique of historicism by Chakrabarty: "the waiting room of history". Alterity relates to "the concept and treatment of the alien objectified other"; and as "anthropology is the academic discipline most *overtly* involved in the objectified imagery of otherness", it has received the kinds of critiques already discussed (Rapport, 2000, 9). Anthropology, "the science of alterity...provided both the technical vocabulary and the objectified imagery" through which conquered peoples could be "incorporated into a European mental framework" (ibid., 365). Present day deconstructions of the "discourse on the primitive other" are the foundation of alterity theory; this aims at "uncovering the intellectual effects of the imperialist, Enlightenment, and post-Enlightenment thought", and as such, is one of the critical frameworks in which this thesis is located (ibid., 11).

Nevertheless, while critics such as Mason claim "All ethnography... is an experience of the confrontation with Other set down in writing, an act by which that Other is deprived of its specificity", such large claims should be moderated by counter-specificities: closely examined relationships between a colonial ethnographer such as Best, and his principal informants, such as Tutakangahau (Mason, 1990, 13). There were certainly prevailing literary conventions that influenced Best's portrayal of his subjects - it could hardly be otherwise. However, the contention that someone like Tutakangahau was

denied *all* specificity is too large a claim. Aspects of his literary portraits were close to fiction, and shaped by romantic and extinctionist impulses in Best's literary school,²² but it stretches credibility to claim that such representations, "being the product of the ethnographic scientific discourse, they are but fiction" (Rapport, 2000, 11). A more damaging claim of the alterity school is that such representations took on an enduring reality, and the agency for self-representation (in the literary arena at least) was removed from Māori (in this case) and controlled largely by Pākehā. This remained the case until the 1970s: the print exoticisation of Māori culture was a fact of life until a post-war baby boom generation of academics and writers began to produce a body of alternative representations (Ihimaera, Grace, Walker).²³

Alterity has another function in establishing difference - which also has relevance in Best's case - "the establishment of *self*-identity...[rather than]...the empirical reality of the other" (ibid., 12). Writing Māori as primitive established Pākehā as civilised: the inheritors by virtue of evolutionary progress of the land and its mythic past, delivered by the prior owners as they passed off the world stage. This gave Best and his peers forms of identity and inclusion in the new frontier, while creating images of otherness that were "*products of a process of exclusion*" (ibid., 13). The evolutionary discourse that on the one hand valorised Māori as having manifested a pristine primitivism, while on the other devalued their demoralised status as survivals, left them without a future on the edge of history. This prevailing extinctionist discourse was virtually unchallenged, and served as a powerful spur to Best to gather "data" that was passing away with the elders of Tuhoe. It is this process of exclusion which Bhabha addresses in his conceptions of "the unhomely": a description of all who are marginalised and do not belong. In this case the colonised subjects of Best's ethnography are seen to have no home within the

²² See eg, *Waikaremoana-the sea of rippling waters*. (Best, 1897 (1975))

²³ The argument has been made by Patrick Evans that such ūir figures as Ihimaera were themselves exoticisers - in the early nostalgic/pastoral stage of his writing career - but at the very least, Māori were taking over the reins of self-image. (Evans, 1990, 273)

system (ibid., 363). It refers to “the state of ‘hybridity’ (being neither here nor there)”, and attempts to articulate a way for a ‘literature of recognition’ to empower the disempowered (ibid., 364). The discussion of Tutakangahau’s role in this thesis, as a co-creator of Best’s ethnography, is an attempt at the retrospective recognition of his Tuhoe voice within Best’s writing. By going further, and searching out his presence in the literature (letters, newspapers reports, and government records), a counter narrative is set up within Best’s own record - a form of “writing back”, even although the editorial control of his material is still being shaped here by a writer from the so-called dominant culture.

One of the aims of this approach is to “bring the unhomely home” - to present them more clearly in time and place through empirical data that re-inscribes their voices, as they exist in the written record. This is to resist the idea that men like Tutakangahau could only be authentic if they were able to assist in recording traditional material from a frozen, mythic past, “where to *remain* authentic and *thus appreciated* they [Māori] could not leave” (ibid., 367). It is to recognise that Māori were “home” just as they were, well able to speak for themselves, whenever they could gain access to the available media. Only the “culturally very ‘pure’ were [seen to be] worthy of anthropological attention... the unhomely are ‘hybrids’ ...no longer *authentic*” (ibid.). In accepting that we are all to some degree hybrids, not all of us are marginalised, or classified as inauthentic.²⁴ The notion of authenticity has political power, and was used against people such as Tuhoe to control them in the 1890s (the Premier Seddon’s promise of a Urewera sanctuary, post-1896, contained “endangered species” references to Tuhoe, along with the flora and fauna). Māori could only be true Māori if they continued to display an essential neolithic nature and culture: *pre-historic*, a people without history

²⁴ I was born in England post-WW2, and emigrated with my parents in 1950. Natively English, I became culturally a New Zealander while growing up in an emigrant family “neither here nor there”. Raised on the West Coast, I was told I could not be a “real Coaster” because I had not been born there - but I was still a member of the Pākehā (European-descended) community who believed they had the best race relations in the world.

indeed. Part of the aim in bringing the unhomely home is to expose the exoticism that weakens Best's undoubted value and to focus on the quotidian of life, of observer and observed. Bhabha reminds us that we all have "exotic" differences, but in the everyday lived reality of a family, group or society, they are normal and unexceptional.²⁵

The final aspect of this survey of colonial discourse theory as it relates to Best is to look at a recent series of critiques on the place of historicism in locating indigenous peoples "outside of history". These are extensions of Wolf's arguments, in this case from an Indian historian of postcolonial thought, Dipesh Chakrabarty. Said, it may be recalled, had attacked Western historicism as "universalising and self-validating" (Said, 2001, 211), a meta-narrative that underlay Orientalism. Although often seen in a brand of world history written by capitalism's opponents from the Left, it still came at the post-colonial debate from the "vantage point of Europe or the West" (ibid., 209). Chakrabarty is based in the West, at the University of Chicago: he is one of those same Indian academic expatriates to have attracted criticism from Washbrook (seen earlier) as beneficiaries of a rhetoric of victimisation. He argues that some of Chakrabarty's concepts such as "community" and "hierarchy" ... "obscure relations of exploitation", legitimating localised abuses of power as functions of " 'traditional' and 'local' authority" (Washbrook, 1999, 608).

Chakrabarty argues that "Historicism enabled European domination of the world in the nineteenth century" (Chakrabarty, 2000, 7). Historicism as a mode of thinking has two primary characteristics: to understand the nature of anything in this world, we must first see it as "an historically developing entity...unique and whole...some kind of unity at least in potentia (sic)" and second, "as something that develops over time" (ibid., 23). The passage of time that constitutes both " the narrative and the concept of development" is

²⁵ "A logic for preserving/protecting the pure is the value we put on difference. It's reasonable to think that if Māori are like Pākehā, whom we know, they're not interesting." Lyndsay Head, email communication, December 2005.

that conceived of by Walter Benjamin as “the secular, empty, and homogenous time of history” (ibid). Although challenged by alternative views, Chakrabarty contends that much of this historiography “remains deeply historicist”; instancing “Marxist or liberal views of the world” as part of this meta-narrative, underpinned by “genre” histories such as capitalism, industrialisation, and nationalism (ibid). Historicism made “modernity or capitalism...[appear to become] ...something that became global over time”(ibid., 7). It allowed Marx to say that the more developed countries showed “to the less developed, the image of [their] own future” (ibid). It posited historical time as “a measure of the cultural distance ...[in institutional development] that was assumed to exist between the West and the non-West” (ibid). Development happened “first in Europe and then elsewhere”, denying according to Johannes Fabian co-evalness, or contemporary, differential cultural change.²⁶

The relevance here of Chakrabarty’s argument is how this form of historical thinking created a “waiting room of history” that said “not yet” to the inhabitants of the colonised and settler nations created in the 19th century. John Stuart Mill claimed that Africans were “*not yet* civilised enough to rule themselves”, consigning them and all other “ ‘rude’ nations to an imaginary waiting room of history”(ibid., 8). Mankind was going in the same direction (progress) but some had arrived earlier than others. This had implications not just for an ethnographic view of culture and history, but in the dispensation of political power: colonial governance was theorised as a form of tutelage, the “not yet”, or the “wait longer”, so derided by Martin Luther King in his civil rights speeches of the 1960s. According to this view, anti-colonial movements post-WW2 “were predicated on this urgency of the ‘now’ “, refusing to wait any longer for power, even if they were sometimes as unprepared as their Western critics claimed. It is from this nexus of historical forces that the so-called “subaltern classes of the third world” emerged: “peasants, tribals, semi- or unskilled industrial workers...from the subordinate social groups” (ibid).

²⁶ Fabian, Johannes, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Objects*, (New York, Columbia UP, 1983), chapters 1 and 2.

For Chakrabarty, this critique “goes to the heart of the question of political modernity in non-Western societies” (ibid., 9). It was these very issues that Tutakangahau in Tuhoe, and many other Māori were working out in the years Best was gathering his ethnographic data in their midst. The Pākehā collector studiously refused to acknowledge such political forces as factors influencing his research, demanding a serious answer. In Chakrabarty’s analysis, it was by recourse to such “stagist” versions of history that “European political and social thought made room for the political modernity of the subaltern classes” (ibid.).

As will be seen later in this chapter, Best’s role as an instrument of the government has been much criticised by Māori and Pākehā commentators, subsequent to the radical diminishment of Māori subalternity since the 1960s. An evolving discourse has variously emphasised Pākehā guilt, Māori agency and the need to either disown, or completely revise and revalue the Māori material men such as the ethnographer collected and worked up into a vision of traditional culture. Post-colonial thought has overtaken Best’s imperial mindset, and post-modern theory has steadily relativised cultural values. A view from without, beyond the New Zealand setting where we are attempting to redraw our founding narratives, can assist in focussing what may have been happening for the actors of that time. Chakrabarty uses Guha’s critique of Hobsbawn’s Marxist view of the “pre-political peasant” to attack the idea that peasant social movements were “archaic” (ibid., 12-13). While the Indian “peasant-as-citizen did not partake of the ontological assumptions that the social sciences take for granted”, their understanding of the modernizing colonial world revealed them as real contemporaries of colonialism (13). They were able to read “the relations of power that they confronted in the world...by no means unrealistic or backward-looking” (ibid.). This is a useful frame in which to place the “ethnographic Tutakangahau” as conceived by Best, and to ask just how modern and modernising was this “old-time Māori”.²⁷ Guha, Chakrabarty suggests, “fundamentally pluralises the history

²⁷ See Best, *Tuhoe* (1925), “the old-time Maori School of Learning” (v) and elsewhere.

of power in global modernity”; it is these pluralities that emerge in closer examination of Best’s work with men such as the Tuhoe leader. Things that “seemed ‘traditional’ in this modernity were ‘traditional’ only in so far as [their] roots could be traced back to pre-colonial times, but [they were] by no means archaic in the sense of being outmoded’ ” (ibid.,15). So-called “cultural survivals” were simply ongoing usages with a place in that contemporary world, alongside the adoptions of Pākehā modernity that had become a part of Tuhoe culture by the time Best arrived in the Urewera in 1895. The detail only generates complexity: no theorisation of history can account for every instance. This counsels caution and respect for historical actors by later revisionist writers. The present may rewrite the past, but it cannot change it, nor “pit a regressive colonialism against an account of a robust nationalist movement” if such broad-brush categories existed neither in India, nor here in New Zealand (ibid).

19th Century Anthropology:

The following section will examine the influence of some major works that analyse the development of 19th century anthropology. George Stocking is the main contributor here: his *Victorian Anthropology* (1987) remains the ūr text for any historical survey of this area. Anthony Pagden’s *The fall of natural man* (1982) is a study of the origins of comparative ethnology, looking at American Indian populations. Its early sections introduce the origins of ethnography in Greek history, and the issue of savagery and literacy. Erickson and Murphy’s useful general survey *A History of Anthropological Theory* (1998) has provided background material, most usefully on classical cultural evolutionism (44-52) and evolution versus diffusionism (52-59). Eriksen and Nielsen’s, *A History of Anthropology* (2001) gives a general history of social and cultural anthropology: biological and social evolutionism, the Victorians, and diffusionism (17-29). Following this discussion, the focus will move in Chapter 1(b) to the specific site of a New Zealand-based historiography of 19th century anthropology, and its critique of the Smith-Best school.

The building blocks of the late 19th century ethnography embraced by Best, and deployed in a New Zealand setting were a racialised, developmental model of human cultural evolution. This progressive model of savage, barbarian and civilised had antecedents in classical Greek thought, through to the early explorations of what became the colonial age of European expansion in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. Pagden explores this intellectual inheritance through a study of Spanish entry into the Americas in the 16th century, focussing on pre-Enlightenment methods of human classification employed by the Europeans, and the development of a relativist approach - the beginnings of a comparative ethnography (Pagden, 1982). He traces the origins of the term “barbarian” in Greek thought, with its notion of the inferiority of non-Greek speakers: “*barbaros*...a babbler” (16). Such outsiders, beyond the *polis* (city) and devoid of *logos* (reason) had no share in the human community. He describes this line of thinking in the medieval churches, forming a biblical anthropology of mankind that was to travel with missionaries to the New World. This shaped their views of peoples they encountered, which changed over time through contact and engagement (ibid., 10-26). Such comparative ethnologies became, in Pagden’s analysis, foundational in the development of historical relativism. With Best’s writings in view, there is a link here from such early attempts at describing and conceiving difference. His early attempts to portray Māori - without the powers of abstract thought, and later, as possessing it in their religious concepts - exemplify the way in which such classifications could render a people as outside the family of literate humanity, and therefore lesser beings. Conceiving difference is the beginning of theories of alterity and ultimately, the savage Other.

George Stocking has described anthropology “in the broad sense [as] the central intellectual problem of the 1860s”, with the ongoing debate between “the degradationists (or degenerationists) and the developmentalists (or progressionists)” as key (Stocking, 1963, 2). This debate between those holding to a biblical or related view of humanity as fallen, or lapsed from a previous higher state, and those who saw the reverse - an evolutionary rise - had roots

in the Enlightenment and would stretch into the later development of Darwinian science and its Spencerian survivalist manifestations. It became the framework for the rise of Müller's philology and comparative religion, Tylorean models of culture and in particular, an evolutionary scheme of religious development - the conviction that cultures could be described, and classified, by scientific method. It was from such ideas, and within this major historical debate that Elsdon Best was to form and shape his own view of anthropology, and in particular, the evolution of religious belief and practice. In Stocking's early analysis, Tylor, the father of modern anthropology, saw "culture as striving toward progress or perfection". In *Primitive Culture* (1871:II, 410) he described the "office of ethnography" as being to expose "the remains of a crude old culture which [had] passed into harmful superstition, and to mark these out for destruction" (ibid., 7). This thinking appears repeatedly in Best's later work: he accepted Tylor's identification of culture with civilisation, and its place within the "framework of progressive social evolution" (ibid., 8,9).

Victorian Anthropology (1987) is Stocking's major contribution to the historiography of 19th century anthropological development; it is a vital source for locating Best's education as a self-taught frontier intellectual, engaging in the cultural warfare introduced above. Best longed to be recognised as pioneering "the noble science of anthropology" in New Zealand (Best, 1920). As Stocking puts it, "ethnology was the science of savages in the sense that it was the only scholarly discourse that took them seriously as subject matter" (Stocking, 1987, 48). Not only did these writers take "savages" seriously but also themselves, as shapers of "an intellectual transformation as historically significant as the Copernican revolution" (ibid., 325). Redefining humanity's place in nature, the cosmos and time, as well as their relationship to God - to the point of excluding theological assumptions "from the disciplinary discourse" - these Victorian intellectuals shifted the foundations of human understanding, and changed the shape of the modern world their successors would inherit (ibid.). While the early 20th century would react against "evolutionism in anthropology" - and the ethnocentric assumptions

Best received and popularised would become passé in the academic world - science as the measure of humanity would become entrenched. Comparative religion would make faith and practice an object of analysis, gradually relegating revealed religions in the West into what has become a spiritual supermarket of post-modern "choice" (ibid., 326).

To the degree that he came to embody evolutionary assumptions and is now not taken seriously as a theoretical anthropologist, Best was a part of this paradigm shift. He saw himself as an agent of change, getting rid of a missionary anthropology of Māori from the local debate, and replacing it with scientific study (as will be argued, he was unable successfully to achieve either goal). The present day extremes of intelligent design and socio-biology are in a sense, outgrowths of these Victorian debates. Stocking concludes that present positivist and hermeneutic frameworks display unresolved - and unresolvable - issues in contemporary anthropology; it is unlikely that a deterministic "science of culture" will ever be completely abandoned (ibid., 329). Individual contributions from such as Tylor and Best may fade over time, but the argument will continue.

To balance the impersonality of Foucault's discursive model - bodies of knowledge producing thought and thinkers, rather than the reverse - it remains important to consider what mattered to these early writers of New Zealand ethnography, and how their human situation, and vanities affected their choices. Best was not of the same social class as Tylor, and his battle with the missionary Taylor, described more fully in the following chapter, exemplifies the class distinction he would resent throughout his career. Reid has recently argued in an article on class and professionalisation in the New Zealand Institute (1867-1903) that this body was "a class-based and class-defining institution". Reformist attempts during the 1880s were "in part an attempt to replace a social elite with a professionalised one" (Reid, 2005, 21). He asserts that this class-based system "helped to support scientific institutions by solidifying links between New Zealand's tiny band of professional men of science and the colonial political elite" (ibid). Elsdon Best

never belonged to that social or political elite, and was energetically engaged in establishing his place in its professional replacement, with his scientific ethnography of Māori. His vitriolic attacks on Richard Taylor and testy disputes with and resentments of Hamilton, his superior at the Dominion Museum, illustrate the situation of a creative and pioneering individual in a developing field on the colonial periphery, trying to find a place in a system where he was both a social inferior and an intellectual leader. Best's attempts to place himself and his work in an international arena form the next stage of this review, beginning with Ballantyne's thesis of "webs of influence" in the creation of a New Zealand Orientalist discourse: Aryanism in the British Empire, and its local practitioners (2002). This opens a survey of the historiography of New Zealand colonial anthropology, with a closer look at the phenomenon of syncretism in the recording of Māori traditions.

1(b). New Zealand Colonial Anthropology & History: commentary on Best and his anthropology in the local literature.

The years since the sesquicentennial celebration of 1990 have seen an increasing number of books, theses and articles from within the field of New Zealand 19th century history, with special reference to Māori-Pākehā relationships and the work of the colonial ethnographers. General histories such as Belich (1996) and King (2003) have made mention of Best, Smith and The Polynesian Society; Sorrenson has written a history of this important organisation (1992). Gibbons has produced a dissertation on Johannes Andersen (1992), while other thesis writers such as Byrnes (1990) and Whybrow (1993) examine the scholarship of "savagery". Other writers such as Reilly (1989, 1995) and van Meijl (1996) have devoted journal articles to Best and his peers. Three commentators of Māori descent - Smith (1993), Marie (1999) and Te Awekotuku (2003) - have analysed his work and its place in the literature on traditional Māori society. Sissons (1991), Ballara (1998) and others have looked at Best amongst Tuhoe; their work will be considered in the next part of this review. The major contribution surveyed here is

Ballantyne's examination of trans-national links in the creation of Aryanism: *Orientalism and Race* (2002). The shaping metaphor of his thesis, "webs of influence", involves substantial discussions of Best and his contacts with the Orientalist community in India and the wider world.²⁸ Kerry Howe has produced a useful biography on Tregear (1993), which throws light also on Best and the influence of F. Max Müller. His most recent work in the area, *The Quest for Origins*, surveys this debate, and gives a helpful introduction to the work of ethnographers beginning with Cook and covering the work of Best, Smith and Tregear.

The critical discussion here calls for less of the nationalistic "New Zealand in the world" framework; rather, it seeks an examination of "the world in New Zealand", led by writers such as Ballantyne, along with Gibbons and Howe (2001, 2003). The influence of Eric Wolf's trans-national school of historiography is acknowledged in Ballantyne and Gibbons (who also cites Wallerstein and Gunder Frank). Howe in the same journal refers to Gibbons' "paradigm-inverting argument" of 2001; that it is now the "world's role in New Zealand" that needs to be addressed²⁹ (Howe, 2003, 57). These views illustrate the central methodology of this thesis: to examine Best's writings in order to establish the role of the 19th century international literary-scientific community in the education of, and engagement with, those who sought to create a New Zealand ethnological industry that would gain the respect of the overseas "experts" in the field. This section of the review will show that there has been no significant academic study of Best and his influence in this period, and no new major biographical work since Craig's standard but dated life (1964).³⁰ This will locate the present study, and contextualise more closely its contribution to current levels of analysis and comment, addressing writings on traditional Māori society in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

²⁸ See Chapter 5, "The Māori according to Best".

²⁹ Keith Sinclair Memorial Lecture, University of Auckland, 17th October, 2001. Revised and re-published in *NZJH*, 37:1 (2003), pp38-49.

³⁰ An MA thesis by I M Eggers using the pen-name "Adore" was published in 1935. It is little more than a post-mortem survey, containing a short biography and bibliography - notably, written after some contact with Best's wife, Adelaide. ATL, MSX-6800 (MS-Group-1233). (Eggers, 1935)

Turning first to the recent general studies, there is little on offer from Belich and King, nor from Māori commentators such as Walker. His biography of Sir Apirana Ngata, *He Tipua* (2001) gives a mainly approving précis of Best's collection of Māori lore, published with the Ngāti Porou leader's enthusiastic support. James Belich's two volumes begin with *Making Peoples* (1996) - a general history from "Polynesian Settlement to the End of the Nineteenth Century". There are only three brief references to Best here: the first, to Best and others "constructing Maori history" (24); to "Best's Tuhoe" having garden lands to supplement bush food gathering (69); and his apparent haste to record a " 'traditional lifestyle' " threatened by the "encroachment of Empire" into the Urewera (Belich, 1996, 262). Belich caricatures Best, claiming he "pretended respect for the tradition of the elders he interviewed, and disrespect for it to his European readers" (ibid., 24). A single quote - Best listening to "puerile tales and wild myths" - is the substance of this shallow critique. The common reader will not gain a great deal from Belich's Best: there is a lack of nuance here, even for a general history, and a severe distortion of Best's relationship with his informants.

Paradise Reforged (2001) is the companion volume, "From the 1880s to the Year 2000". Best does not figure at all here, unlike Tregear, whose Aryan Māori thesis merits a lengthy discussion (207-215) in a section called "Whitening Maori". Although the book covers the last fifty years of Best's life, he is deemed far less important than Tregear - who has been demonstrably less influential. Belich's contribution to a view of Best is specious on the one hand and deficient on the other, and offers little light. Michael King's *The Penguin History of New Zealand* (2003) touches briefly on Best (and Smith) in the discussion of Māori origins (45ff); the "Maruiwi myth" (55ff) and its place in justifying Pākehā evolutionary ascendancy. A footnote in the chapter, "Maori Lifeways", notes Best's interest in "old-time" Māori culture and his clash with Rua's "experiment in acculturation" at Maungapohatu (248). A far more thoroughgoing account of the ethnographer's life and times and the founding of the Polynesian Society, Sorrenson's *Manifest Duty: the*

Polynesian Society over 100 Years (1992) gives the essential historical background. His earlier *Maori Origins and Migrations* (1979) is a study of "Pakeha myths about Māori origins" - arguing that as their "real stake in the land has diminished, so their claim to a cultural and historical identity has become more important" (Sorrenson, 1978, 86).

For an overarching view of Best in the Orientalist discourse of his times, Ballantyne's *Orientalism and Race: Aryanism in the British Empire*, (2002) is the most recent serious contribution to the historicization of the colonial discourse theories outlined above. His focus is on imperial networks - "webs of influence" - in the creation of an Aryan origin for mankind, emerging from Sanskritist studies in British colonial India. This examination of an Indocentrism reaching into New Zealand ethnography opens with an epigraph from his mentor, Eric Wolf - and goes on to canvass major writers from Richard Taylor to Edward Tregear, prominent in the formation of the Aryan Māori thesis. He rejects "a vision of Orientalism or colonial knowledge as the hegemonic imposition of metropolitan ideologies upon colonial societies"; and moves "beyond a literary focus on the static text...to imperial systems of circulation, recovering the transmission of ideas, information and identities across the empire". (Ballantyne, 2002, 16) Expanding on Wolf's emphasis on a materialistic, trade-driven globalisation, he looks instead at the rapid and fluid transmission of ideas and writing throughout the British Empire. He illustrates these exchanges with multiple examples of the relationships between colonial ethnographers, missionaries and officials, not only between the "periphery" and the "centres" (Wellington-London), but also sub-imperial and provincial relationships (Best in New Zealand with Peal in Burma).

By examining predominantly diffusionist views of cultural change and progress that shaped Best's worldview, Ballantyne illustrates his metaphor from two evidential sites: India and New Zealand. He looks to engage in the reverse of that for which Marshall Sahlins has recently been criticised: "not so much a facts-up thoughtful anthropology as a theory-down illustrated

anthropology" (Davidson, 2005, 11). Ballantyne uses the exchange of influence and information between India and New Zealand to demonstrate how Orientalist ideas first arrived here, gradually filtered into settler views of Māori (Taylor), and were worked up into a fully-fledged theory of origins by Tregear (Ballantyne, 2002, 56-82). He also studies Māori literacy and their responses to Christianity: a recasting of their identities through various political and religious movements - plus a decided lack of interest in Aryanist theories compared with the influence of biblical, Semitic models (ibid., 146-168). While much of this latter debate has been well covered through the 1980s and 1990s (Elsmore, Webster, Binney, Head et al), Ballantyne's contribution is to locate the sources of the Aryanist theories and trace their dissemination through the colonial web. He traces the New Zealand writers who fed back ideas and information into a rapidly growing discourse of imperial ethnographies.

His "facts-up" histories are evidenced by the relationship Best formed with Samuel Peal, "an enthusiastic ethnographer and botanist on the Assam frontier" - who, incidentally, was not a believer in Māori Aryanist roots (ibid., 78). Peal formed "an extensive web of correspondents...E.B.Tylor, William Wyatt Gill...Percy Smith and Elsdon Best in New Zealand" (ibid.). Peal was by all accounts a tireless correspondent, including among his contacts Max Müller, so influential in Best's thinking.³¹ The work of the "grand theorists such as E.B. Tylor" and Müller reached out to the field workers in the colonies who became sub-theorists, contributors to the grand debates of diffusionist anthropology (ibid., 16). With the establishment of the Polynesian Society in 1892, New Zealand became one of the more important colonial centres for the steadily globalising "science of anthropology". Best's authority increased, especially from 1913 onwards when his article in "*Man*" on Io and the high god thesis garnered him worldwide attention (Best, 1913). His correspondence with Peal was concerned with the subject of phallus worship amongst Māori, linking this with his belief in the doctrines of prehistoric "survivals". Local

³¹ See Best, Correspondence and papers, [1895], ATL, Reference Number 80-115-02/03, Letter from Best to Peal.

traditions holding Tiki to be the Creator were personified forms of phallus worship; Tiki was associated in myths with tuna (eels), which Best believed “echoed Aryan mythology”³² (Ballantyne, 2002, 136). Determined as Best and his peers were to locate Māori in this Aryanist history however, Māori themselves found little in common with these attempts to convert them into honorary Pākehā brethren.

Ballantyne’s work helps to establish Aryanism in 19th century New Zealand as a discourse of assimilation and obliteration: it aimed at the eradication of difference. Yet for many Māori, the biblical anthropology with its local millennialist outgrowths of resistance theology became a discourse of empowerment “that countered the claims of Pakeha history and ethnology” (ibid., 191). While Te Rangi Hiroa (Sir Peter Buck) went on to success in the European discipline of anthropology, the majority of his people remained in rural hinterlands, disempowered politically, shaped until the post-WW2 urban migration by their own syncretisms of tradition with indigenous theologies. Anthropology was of little use in the papakāinga; yet as Ballantyne observes, such “colonial knowledge” was not simply an instrument “to protect and maintain imperial authority” (ibid., 192). This knowledge was of a dialogic nature in its production, “dependent on indigenous expertise” (ibid., 194). The corpus of oral transmission was weakened with the rise of literacy, while the work of those like Best would remain “on the books” to be re-appropriated and re-interpreted by the succeeding generations of Māori who did not “die out” as predicted. Just as theory was “reworked and indigenised in various colonial contexts” in the 19th century, its products today are undergoing revision and revaluation in post-colonial theory and public debate (ibid., 196).

Much of this revision locally has been undertaken since the late 1980s and early 1990s in the form of theses, and articles based on such research by a small number of historians, appearing in academic journals, principally the

³² “Māori Personifications”, *JPS*, 32 (1923), 53-56) See also Chapter Two, Best’s letters to Smith from the Urewera.

New Zealand Journal of History. The theses considered here variously examine the ways the Polynesian Society scholars portrayed Māori in their writings. Byrnes investigates “one aspect of New Zealand intellectual history, the Pakeha perception of the Maori” - especially the work of Best, Smith and Tregear (1890-1920) - and how these writers “represented Maori in their texts” (Byrnes, 1990, ii). Her work is a precursor to my examination of Best, as it looks at his intellectual influences, his need for peer acceptance, and the way in which “Best’s ‘Maori as he was’ was, in reality, ‘the Maori as he wished’ “ (ibid., 100). Best’s search for a Māori being, or identity (ibid., 13) and his work in transferring a “European intellectual tradition to the Antipodes” (ibid., 34) introduce what is amplified in my own argument. Whybrow, with a brief nod to Said on the European domination of “peoples of the Orient” (Whybrow, 1993, 2) and Byrne’s thoughts on assimilation (ibid., 3), seeks to “analyse European stereotypes” of Māori appearing in ethnographies by Taylor (missionaries), Grey (government officials), Shortland (early anthropologist), plus Hadfield and Fox (writing on Māori and war) (ibid., i,ii). He cites Byrnes on Best, as a systematic researcher whose work “still lacked that element of analytical study” (ibid., 93). There is not a great deal of originality to be had here, but the field may be observed opening up an interest in the work of the Pākehā ethnographers.

Much more weighty is Gibbons’ “Going Native”, examining the “activities of Johannes Andersen” in early 20th century New Zealand, as a “case study of cultural appropriation in a settler society” (Gibbons, 1992). Something of a Best protégé, Andersen (1873-1962) carried the torch of the old-guard auto-didacts after Best’s death in 1931. Unlike Best he was not a speaker of Māori nor much acquainted with the Māori society of his day. In Gibbons’ view, Andersen exemplifies the early cultural nationalist, seeking indigenisation by borrowing or stealing Māori cultural resources in “discursive strategies of cultural appropriation”, in order to “authenticate [themselves] as...autochthonous New Zealander[s]” (Abstract). In this view, he was one of many Pākehā “who incorporated aspects of Maori culture into Pakeha signifying systems in an attempt to develop a sense of identity” (ibid.).

Andersen is for Gibbons “a suitable focus for exposition” of his thesis, having no “intention of making [him] a scapegoat”, as the European appropriator of Māori cultural items (ibid., viii).

It is difficult however to fully avoid this impression, especially where Best’s relationship with Andersen is described. The two men are shown to be of similar backgrounds (no formal higher education), with like needs and opportunity: “ethnology was apparently one of the last fields in which the auto-didact might excel” (ibid., 160). Andersen is portrayed as a self-appointed Pākehā expert, a term more often and accurately applied to Best (ibid., Chapter 4,1). Best’s expertise is dealt with summarily at the beginning of Chapter 6, where Gibbons discusses Andersen’s “metaphor of colonisation”, referring to the songs in Māori collected by Ngata for *Ngā Moteatea*.³³ Andersen described such songs as a “mine of wealth”, and employed their translations in his own later work.³⁴ This is compared with language used by Best in *Waikaremoana* (1897), speaking of the “kura huna...the concealed treasure” of Tuhoe knowledge (see my Chapter 4). This Gibbons explains as Best conveying “the frisson” of newly acquired knowledge, in the midst of indulging “the conventional inflated rhetoric of colonisation” (Gibbons, 1992, 561). Andersen’s expertise is described as sought after by Best, “who in continuing to indulge [their] interests in the culture of the Other” collected the lore of a vanishing people (ibid., 666). Together with Andersen, he appears as one who adopted Māori culture “to deproblematise questions of the legitimacy of a Pākehā presence by claiming, or working towards, autochthonous status” (ibid., 683).

By this estimation, their use of Māori materials in a print culture removes Māori self-definition through such “complicit activities” (ibid., 684). Best emerges from this, if not as a scapegoat, then with little credibility after a

³³ Andersen - with a limited ability in the language - persuaded Ngata in the 1940s to render the Māori material into English, to make it more easily accessible.

³⁴ Gibbons, P. J. 'Andersen, Johannes Carl 1873 - 1962'. *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, updated 7 July 2005. URL: <http://www.dnzb.govt.nz/>

lifetime spent both in study and in the field. Gibbons also has little time for those who claim that syncretistic forces have reconstructed indigeneity - the “invention of tradition” school - citing Trask refusing the attempts of “haole experts” in Hawai’i to liberate Hawai’ians from their past. He looks for more “extensive knowledge of acculturative processes” and the ways “the cultures [Māori and Pākehā] have become inextricably bound together” in a shared inheritance (ibid., 686-7). One element missing in this perspective is the not-so-small matter of “cultural appropriation” by Māori (or Hawai’ians), and the potential to both patronise and make victims of colonised peoples where the “traffic” is characterised by liberal academics as moving only in one direction.

Best and Tuhoe:

While such research into the ethnographic writers has for the most part made superficial or tangential reference to Best and his significance, a number of articles and book chapters by established and emerging writers (Webster, Sissons, Ballara, Reilly, van Meijl, Hilliard, Smith, Marie et al) have made closer examinations of Best and his school, and specifically, his work amongst Tuhoe. Few address his oeuvre at length, but from 1980 onwards, writing directly concerned with assessing his influence grew more frequent in the revisionist climate that followed the Māori renaissance of the 1970s and the maturing of the post WW2 “baby-boom” generation of academics. These writers are in the main Pākehā historians and anthropologists, acutely conscious of the shortcomings of their forebears. Revisionism in such a climate varies from attempts to re-examine the record, using a greater store of historical data, to a crusading impulse that at its worst sets up and knocks over straw people who can no longer debate the issues. In an atmosphere of post-colonial guilt, the temptation is to expiate past “settler sins” by moralising over writers who can no longer defend themselves. The more difficult task is to enter the thought world of those such as Best, in an attempt to understand more fully why they may have acted as they did. Where this leads to a post-facto vilification of ethnographers like Best, and the

valorisation of his Māori informants, a born-again patronage of both parties is the likeliest outcome.

Works on Rua Kenana from the late 1970s (Webster and Binney) have brief references to Best and his relationship with Rua. Webster notes Best's comments on Tuhoe history and traditions (82-85) and social conditions observed by him at the time (Webster, 1979, 146-147). Binney mentions Best's relationships with Rua's disciples (26); the effects of Rua's preaching noted by Best (Waimana deserted, as his followers vacated the settlement, 33); and the ethnographer's sarcastic remarks about the community at Maungapohatu, c.1916 (Binney, 1979, 79). There are minor references to Best as a source in her life of Te Kooti, *Redemption Songs* (1995). More intensive scrutiny is given by Hill in the Whakatane-based journal, *Historical Review*, in a 1988 article. "Elsdon Best and Tuhoe: a cautionary tale", criticises Best's position as a "partisan advocate" and a "protagonist in inter-hapu struggles", his literary works distorted by "ethnocentric perspective and motivation" (Hill, 1988, 129). Humble as it seems, this short article in a local journal opened up a new age in Best criticism, ushering in the first major attempt by Sissons (1991) to re-assess his work. Sissons had made contact with Tuhoe in 1974, conducting a local labour survey at Waimana over a six-week period for Victoria University's Industrial Relations Centre. Invited by local elders to write a new history of Te Waimana, he returned in his capacity as an anthropology graduate (1977-1979), and "lived in the valley and held conversations with Tuhoe elders about their past" (Sissons, 1991, ix-x). The result - *Te Waimana: the Spring of Mana* (1991) - begins with a review of Best's *Tuhoe*, and looks at the ways Tuhoe elders, during Sisson's tenure amongst them, accounted for their past. His analysis of Best is structured by four "domains of historical discourse" he identifies as existing amongst his hosts: historical narratives on ancestors (kōrero); kōrero on (more recent) extended whānau (related families); messianic kōrero "centred on the gifted leader, Rua Kenana" and his followers; and personal reminiscence (ibid., x).

Sissons challenges the kind of history Best was writing in *Tuhoe*: yet his own account of Best's time in the Urewera (based on Craig, 1964) is not always accurate. The ethnographer is said to have arrived there in May 1885, when Best was in America (ibid., 3). He also claims that by 1906, Best, frustrated in his work as Māori Health Officer in Ruātoki, and "encouraged by Percy Smith...turned his attentions increasingly towards the past" (ibid., 5). Best's attentions had *always* been directed to the past, from his arrival in 1895: gathering information on traditional Māori society was his mission from the very beginning. The government jobs (quartermaster, Commission Secretary, health official) provided him with an entrée to Tuhoe society and an income. Sisson's critique is of Best's scholarly methods, his presentation of Tuhoe history, which "did not follow the genealogical order" (he provides a figure here [1] to illustrate Best's method, but it is not clear what *authentic* genealogical order Sissons is comparing Best's work with) (ibid., 6). He omits Best's "more general discussion of religion", the focus of this thesis and arguably a more defining aspect of Best's views of Māori. He argues that Best's determination to give "this political confederation an integrated history" was driven by a desire to establish chronology and sequence - whereas the inter-related hapū, the descendants of Tuhoe-potiki, were actually providing him with political statements concerned with identity and mana, deriving from "founding ancestors" (ibid., 8). Unable to get all his notes "in chronological sequence", Best "proceeded by districts" - but the local accounts of warfare, like the ancestor stories were never uni-linear, but multi-vocal and seemingly contradictory³⁵ (ibid., 14). In this view, these wars and the colonial wars that followed are presented by Best as part of an "evolutionary inevitability" in which the "Pakeha Wars", completing the history in Part I, are "depoliticised and naturalised". Pacification by a military civilisation had overtaken the turf wars of savagery (ibid., 15). Best's omission of the "half a million acres of land" confiscated from Bay of Plenty tribes is part of a "rhetoric [that] concealed the political reality" of conquest (ibid., 16). Tuhoe "isolation" was finally ended by the building of a west-to-east road

³⁵ See Chapter 3, Best in the Urewera.

through the mountain heartland, by which time “[their] history had at last converged with that of their historian.”

It seems unrealistic to expect Best to have written from a Māori point-of-view, and naïve in retrospect to accuse him of bringing Tuhoe into a Pākehā history by linking their “tribal history” with the chronology of a European settlement that reached back into the Old World. Best had to make sense of what was in front of him with the materials at his disposal, and if there is propaganda and omission in his account, it is hardly surprising. He was not a trained historian, and undertook the writing of Part I of *Tuhoe* as much out a sense of obligation to his hosts, rather than a massaging of dispossessions. In his attitude towards resistance to government forces, he was very much the soldier who had participated in the destruction of Parihaka in 1881. Seen from another perspective, the wonder might be that such a child of his times, with no formal education beyond the age of fifteen, had managed to graduate from farm work and saw-milling to chronicling Māori history and traditions. It is not that he got so much wrong, but that he was able to generate so much of value in the historical record. Best was always more interested in Māori origins, mythology and religion, and it is in Part II that he attempts to address “the deeds of the ancestors” in myth, tradition and history (ibid.). Sissons believes that for Best, “Hawaiki was a place of racial origin”, and in the canoe traditions, and also those of supernatural origins, he attempted to unravel “believable and unbelievable” narratives (ibid., 17, 19). By the sifting of “believable ‘facts’ from unbelievable ‘fancy’”, the meanings of the narratives were radically altered”. In this argument, had Best “followed a genealogical order of presentation”, Tuhoe knowledge would not have been “fragmented”, nor the links obscured between the “domains of discourse” Sissons proposes (ibid., 19). These relate to mythical ancestors, founding ancestors and recent generations within living memory. By this reckoning, the “Tuhoe historical order was hidden as tipuna wandered across pages of text” (ibid.).

In this critique, Best appears both damned if he does and damned if he doesn’t: he is guilty of imposing an alien historical order, and yet Sissons

establishes one which seems very like Best's model, based on myth-tradition-history. Tuhoe narratives could only "become historically meaningful when related in terms of an extrinsic order - a chronological sequence" (ibid., 21). Best's history is seen to exist only for a "Pakeha audience" - Tuhoe knowledge "objectified, judged and alienated at a time when the Crown was preparing to further alienate Tuhoe land" (ibid., 20). The linking of Best's intellectual project with settler land hunger is a seductive polemic, but unproven here. Best was part of an administration that steadily outmanoeuvred Tuhoe in matters of land acquisition, and he was certainly writing and collecting this material while employed as a government servant. But his mission was larger: it limits the scope and intent of the work to reduce *Tuhoe* to a text which distorted Māori narratives in order to justify land confiscations by manipulative legislation designed to disempower Tuhoe, and gain final control of their land and resources. Sissons adjudges the work a failure as history because Best "sought to force Tuhoe traditional history into the mould of Western thinking". It seems trite to retort: what else would he do?

In the mid-1990s, more work on Best was emerging, especially in the University of Auckland's *New Zealand Journal of History*. Toon van Meijl's "Historicising Maoritanga: colonial ethnography and the reification of Maori traditions" (311-346) examines the history of the reconstruction of "authentic" Māori culture, in the writings of the ethnographers and the rise of the Young Māori Party (van Meijl, 1996). In Best's work, he sees an attempt to "reconstruct pre-European Māori society", which by the end of the nineteenth century had produced "an ethnographic discourse" that reified Māori traditions (ibid., 327-327). This detemporalisation, a mode of anthropologising history, is seen by van Meijl as not only influencing European scholars, but also being embraced by Best's informants and less knowledgeable Māori. In this analysis, members of the Young Māori Party chose to ignore the transformation of Māori society wrought by colonisation; and accepting Best's accounts of traditional life (gathered under the pressure of extinctionist theory), "transformed the European ethnographic collections...into timeless treasures...eternally essential for Maori identities in past, present and future"

(ibid., 329-330). The syncretistic forces that Best had often chosen to ignore, especially in his reconstruction of traditional religion, were according to van Meijl, also ignored by Māori leaders such as Ngata and Buck, in order to preserve authentic building blocks of Māori culture as the foundation of a renaissance. In this view, this new breed of Māori leadership was forced to rely on Pākehā to remember who they had been, who they were, and might become. For van Meijl, the end result is that far from “countering European dominance”, this “construction of the concept of Maoritanga” completed the (intellectual) colonisation of Māori (ibid., 340).

It is certainly true that Ngata was firmly behind getting Best’s work published, and saw its value in supporting his own political and cultural projects.³⁶ However, the discussions he had with Buck in the old ethnographer’s sunset years, and after Best’s death in 1931 reveal a more ambivalent assessment of his contribution. This is discussed at length in Chapter 7, which will examine Best’s little known influence in the making of Williams’ *Dictionary of the Māori Language*. It should be noted here that their views were not as unequivocal as van Meijl’s argument would suggest. They saw Best as a peerless collector, whose work needed fresh analysis by Māori intellectuals from inside their own changed and changing culture. While they were certainly “inside” Western discourses of politics and anthropology, they were far from accepting all that Best and the old guard of the Polynesian Society had written about the pre-contact world. Webster, in *Patrons of Maori Culture*, also discusses theories of Māoritanga (73-102), and describes Best’s relationship with the British anthropologist George Pitt-Rivers, and their tour of Māori communities on the Wanganui River in 1923 (Webster, 1998). He argues that Pitt-Rivers was a link with Best’s obsolescent “Social Darwinism” and the early forms of cultural relativity emerging from Malinowski’s functionalism (ibid., 85). Their journey to such settlements as Koroniti

³⁶ See Sorrenson, on the Māori Purposes Fund Board, and the Ethnological Board (60-63). According to him, Ngata feared the influence of Skinner and the “new breed” of academic anthropologists, directing money towards the Polynesian Society specifically to fund the publication of Best’s monographs (and *Tuhoe*, in 1925) (Sorrenson, 1992).

(Corinth) is portrayed here as a passing of the baton from the old guard to the new, and continuing forms of colonial anthropological practice. Pitt-Rivers recorded the bitterness of the older Māori men in a vanishing world: guarding the young from “traditional knowledge”, lest it handicap them in European domains. They were better, should they seek such knowledge, to turn to men like Best (ibid.). In this view, Best has captured a Māori past that can no longer safely be entrusted to its owners.³⁷ The British anthropologist records a crowd of young men gathering around Best to be educated on the “old Maori cult, Io, the supreme being” (Pitt-Rivers, 1927, 225). This disputed high god theory, now widely held to be true by Māori is perhaps the surest indicator of Best’s ongoing presence in the discourse touching their traditions. Ignoring the possibility of 19th century religious syncretisms was one of the ways such Pākehā ethnographers reconstructed the pre-contact world.

Just as it was possible for the colonial elite to write such material, it was, and continues to be, as possible for their “subjects” to “write back”.³⁸ The writing of such pasts “as an act of resistance and transformation” and the place of the oral in the written, as “the historians of a subaltern class” speak and write back, underlie Michael Reilly’s 1995 article, “An Ambiguous Past: Representing Maori History” - which uses as its evidence the writing of *Tuhoe* (Reilly, 1995). He intends to examine “revisionary history” and the fresh problems it raises in “Maori historical discourse” (19). Turning first to Royal and Pere, he outlines the importance of oral histories to Māori, the ways Pākehā ethnographic writings about Māori are regarded as partial (the authors were fed “misleading ...and fabricated material”), and how oral records are still seen to be “the best source of the past”, having connection with a “cultural reality”. For Pere, only those with whakapapa (genetic links) have the ability - and should gain approval - to write tribal histories (ibid., 21). Reilly is not blind to the limitations of these arguments (the “false

³⁷ Webster writes as if the elders had told Pitt-Rivers the young should turn to “Te Peehi” (Best). In fact, he is quoting a 1922 letter from “the Maori vernacular newspaper ‘*Toa Takitini*’”, where the writer asserted that Best’s knowledge of “old-time lore...is superior to the present Maori generation” (Pitt-Rivers, 1927, 220).

³⁸ See, *The Empire Writes Back* (Ashcroft, 1989).

information” defence seen to be just that; the fallacy that one’s grandmother may be able to write history, as opposed to telling her stories). He argues - citing Spivak - that indigenous peoples should not reject Western methodologies out of hand; they should be aware of the provisional nature of all investigations and disclosures, and all parties, not just the rejected coloniser are at some point complicit in their own critique. To privilege oral tradition for instance, is to “overlook the massive impact” of European writing and ideas on Māori post-contact.

Texts such as *Tuhoe* cannot be denied, or minimised. As evidenced by this study, they require acknowledgment and respect, in order to attempt the kind of deconstruction he advocates. In Reilly’s reading of Spivak, the virtue of using “the ideas and practices of the West” is to “assert the mana of an indigenous culture” (ibid., 22). Beginning his analysis of *Tuhoe*, he lays down an ideological marker: “In the rest of this paper I wish to demonstrate how the methods and writings of the West *might be turned against themselves* [mine] and in favour of the subaltern classes” (ibid.). The discussion opens with a three-page, condensed biography, taken from Craig (1964) - in which there is little new, and some questionable psychoanalysis of the young Best: “he associated this subjugation of the Maori [tales of the Taranaki wars] with his own subjection to educational authority”³⁹ (ibid., 23). This prologue to the examination of *Tuhoe* is so derivative as to raise serious questions over Reilly’s framework to deconstruct Best’s work. The ethnographer stands accused of posing “as a cultural mediator for future as yet unborn generations of Mataatua descendants”.⁴⁰ This pose, Reilly states, is “displaced by cracks in the rhetorical edifice which he is constructing” (ibid., 28); Best is not in fact

³⁹ This apparently relies on Craig’s imaginings of Best’s childhood world (see p16) - there is no evidence given in the biography of what Best thought on hearing his parents discuss the Taranaki war. His wife may have spoken of this to Craig - we do not know (Craig, 1964).

⁴⁰ “The descendants of Toroa, and Toi, and Hape, of Potiki and Tuhoe, shall seek her [the book, *Tuhoe*] in days that lie before, to reclaim the old-time sagas imparted to the intrusive Pakeha, to re-learn the doings of their courageous forbears who broke through the hanging sky, who knew the ways of many waters, and carried the *mana Maori* across the curve of the earth to the lone land of Aotea-roa.” (Best, 1925, vii)

writing for Tuhoe, then or now, but for “educated and scholarly Pākehā audiences”. This is hardly a revolutionary observation, nor does it take into account Best having both in mind.

The language rapidly becomes overheated: “the future descendants of Mataatua” Best was apparently addressing in this preface “were Maori who had been redeemed by their association with hegemonic Pakehatanga (culture of the Pakeha). These transformed Maori were like Best’s koeke (elders, informants) labelled as good”. They were acceptable because they were like Pākehā and were the last uncontaminated representatives of a pristine culture (ibid.). How a *future* generation could remain “uncontaminated” and reflect their pristine ancestors is a mystery; and Reilly offers no evidence for this claim. While he is correct to note Best’s disdain for the entrepreneurial and charismatic Rua Kenana, this analysis inspires little confidence. Best’s language “betrays the [intended] Pakeha reading audience” (ibid., 29); his use of English archaisms in the text seems a way of “reinforcing the notion of Maori primitiveness” (ibid., 31). Best’s intermittent jokes are seen as his “characteristic ironical mode”; his treatment of the tipua (supernatural ancestor) Maahu-tapoa-nui further irritates Reilly. His consigning of Maahu’s first seven children to folklore and myth provokes this response: “Thus does Western epistemology dispose of the world it cannot and will not comprehend” (ibid.). Along with misrepresenting “narrational reality” and performing acts of censorship, Best is left with little credibility (ibid., 32-33). A set of stories concerning Uenuku-rauri is paraphrased at length, with little comment; the piece concludes with an account of the striking of Mahuru by her husband, Takarehe. Best’s drawing of a moral - women were passive, and needed male protection - is said to be “another example of Best’s wilful misinterpretation” - yet Reilly’s version does not add much more (ibid., 37-38). No evidence is cited to show that Best set out deliberately to misconstrue this story.

Best emerges from this with little credit, for all the foregoing reasons, which are reprised in the conclusion. Reilly does admit the partiality of all texts, “the

product of a diversity of cultural and political interests"; he hopes his reading of *Tuhoe* "may suggest one way into the discourse of Maori history" (ibid., 38). It is difficult to see what way he is proposing. While warning the reader once more of the way this text "betrays the marks of Best's authorial intentions", *Tuhoe* still demands respect in that it "retains the tohu (signs) of its Tuhoe progenitors", whose "interpretations of the past still ring through the signs of Best's readings and misreadings" (ibid., 39). One might add that Reilly's intentions are also signalled: to diminish Best and valorise Tuhoe, with little evidential basis for his scholarship. He appears to have an agenda that is unlikely to support those he wishes to defend, unearthing little that is new about Best the man and what he has bequeathed in this important book. His treatment of *Tuhoe* has recently attracted some attention: a textual examination of Best's "magnum opus" by Chris Hilliard in *Fragments: New Zealand Social and Cultural History* (Dalley & Labrum, 2000).

Hilliard, in an essay that focuses on "the relationship between collection and writing in New Zealand between 1900 and 1950", challenges Reilly's attempts at deconstructing Best via "postcolonial critique", as an inappropriate way of extracting "authentic Maori history from what remains of Best's errors" (Hilliard, 2000, 133). An admirer of the Gibbons school - intellectual colonisation of Māori by Pākehā - his aim is to pay less attention to matters "of 'content' than to *how* history and ethnology were written" (134).

Historians who "quarry newspapers, novels and non-fiction texts", treating them as "symptomatic of monolithic or organic discursive structures" would be better employed attending to "genre, methods and textuality...in marking out a territory for New Zealand intellectual history" (ibid.). His "Textual Museums" examines collecting and writing in history and ethnology during the above period. Late 19th century collectors such as McNab saw themselves as humble collectors - precursors of the modern oral historian - who assembled "facts, memories and anecdotes in texts that read like scrapbooks" (ibid., 119). This "non-synthetic school avoided paraphrase and authorial intervention; Best, whose *Tuhoe* is the major evidential piece here, is by this estimation, "synthetic". His sources are blended with each other and often

unacknowledged, while his first person interjections create an authorial persona overplaying his existence in the text, while depersonalising his Tuhoe informants.

It could equally be argued that Best's wise-cracking, sardonic presence, interjecting from the sidelines, is more obvious and honest than the pretence of objectivity in contemporary historiography. For Hilliard, stylistic archaisms and "purple prose" have the effect of distancing Best "from his Maori subjects", and undermine "a cognate of that distance: Best's scholarly, ethnological authority" (ibid.,). What is missing here is biographical insight: the Pākehā's omnivorous auto-didacticism and its concomitant deep insecurity when facing those privileged by higher education. Best was a sawmiller and ex-colonial trooper, a do-it-yourself intellectual with no educational qualifications. He made no pretence to being the kind of writer Hilliard's contemporary expectations would require of him. His rage at Hamilton stealing his ideas while he was employed at the Dominion Museum is a good example of his hyper-sensitivity and class-based anger.⁴¹ Hilliard's main observation is that Best unconsciously subverts his own attempts at creating a linear history by "piling up *parallel* narratives", calling into question "a key assumption of early-twentieth century New Zealand history and ethnology: that there was one past"(ibid., 130). His evidence for this is the work on "the early tribes of Tuhoeland"(*Tuhoe*, 12-209); something he attributes less to the author's design than to "competing accounts of the Native Land Court testimonies that he drew on to compliment his field notes" (ibid.). Best was indeed aware of Māori testimony in the Court (see *Tuhoe*, 19-20), and calls it into question: "false genealogies were often given by natives" in land claims. Fair comment or not, he would hardly use information that was suspect to support his own notes; Hilliard makes no mention of the large numbers of whakapapa books filled by his early informants (see Chapter 3).

⁴¹ See Craig's biography(Craig, 1964 ,158-161).

Hilliard's method is scarcely more sound: he relies for this information about Best and the Land Court upon a secondary source, Sisson's *Te Waimana* (Sissons, 1991, 5). In this work, it is asserted - with no evidence - that Best drew upon "Native Land Court records" and his thirteen volumes of notes, collected over eleven years. Neither writer cites a Land Court minute book accessed, shown to have influenced Best, nor quotes from one of his notebooks. It is too easy to underestimate this major scholar of Māori history, when arriving at his work with even the slightest moral agenda. The subversion Best accomplishes - consciously or not - is in Hilliard's reading characterised as a good example of "dialogical discourse...different voices...in a textual space...[where] an authoritative author is displaced by a play of voices already existing in a language and culture" (Hilliard, 2000, 132). While *Tuhoe* "is dialogical in a fashion that verges on the novelistic", one imagines that whatever Best's intentions, Hilliard is covertly approving of the polyphony available to the critic who enters such a "textual museum". Considering the voices speaking about Best so far, it is notable that they are all - as he was - Pākehā. The final section of this review examines those few Māori commentators - some from Tuhoe - who have made any kind of academic or public comment on, or analysis of, Te Peehi's (Best's) corpus.⁴²

With the exception of Ranginui Walker - whose published views on Best were noted earlier - there has been little academic response to him by Māori. His research is referenced widely in texts by Māori on Māori history, culture and society (see Chapter 7), but there is scant critique. This is due in part to the historically small number of Māori in tertiary education, and the smaller number of graduates teaching in academia. Since the 1990s, this has begun to change with the emergence of such voices as Linda Tuhiwai Smith and Ngahuia Te Awekotuku, and the kaupapa Māori discourse (by Māori, for Māori, and - sometimes - in Māori). Tertiary writers and researchers are now engaged in various fields that examine his work. Research into Māori society

⁴² It may be noted that Ballara's *Iwi: the dynamics of Māori tribal organization from c.1769 to c. 1945* is not reviewed here. Her comments in Chapter 8, "The scholars and the grand design" (93-107) add little to the above, seeing Best - and Smith - as "slaves to theory" (Ballara, 1998, 103).

by non-Māori, and research methodologies have come under increasing scrutiny: the work of Smith, Marie and Awekotuku being prominent. Tuhoe educators such as Pou Temara and Wharehuia Milroy do not appear to have written extensively on Best, but in 2005, appeared in an hour-long *Waka Huia* television documentary about him, translated excerpts of which will also be discussed here. Rose Pere's work on Māori pedagogy, *Ako* (1990), looks at education from her experience as a Tuhoe educator, but has no direct references to Best. Earlier comments on him by Buck and Ngata are extensively analysed in Chapter 7.

Smith's contribution to the debate is summed up in the title of her most influential work, *Decolonising Methodologies* (1999). Inheriting a line of resistance that stretches back to Fanon, and more recently Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (*Decolonising the Mind*, 1986), Smith's aim is to get the colonial mindset out of research methods. To do so, she revisits the origins of colonial ethnographies - "Western constructions of the Other" - and discusses the way information was collected in indigenous societies, and by whom (Smith, 1999a). The more research became formalised and institutionalised, the more "authoritative and influential" it became (ibid., 79). Best here descends in a line from Cook, Banks and Grey, treating Māori as "research objects"; these intelligent amateurs, moonlighting from their main professions, were seen by their European audiences as having authority by reason of their extensive engagements with native peoples. Once published, their "'objectivity'" became more substantial, while "their 'informants' were relegated to obscurity" (ibid., 82). By Best's time these observers had "become more dangerous in that they had theories to prove", data to gather and races to classify (ibid.). Best she sees as an "amateur scientist", representing this "increasingly systematic research encounter"; one of a number having a "sympathy towards Maori people as an ideal while being hostile towards those Māori who fell short of this construct" (ibid., 83). This was certainly true in the case of Best and Rua Kenana.

Her portrait of Best is of a man balancing his roles as a “colonial official” and an observer of Māori life; she acknowledges his status as a “New Zealand-born ethnologist of high standing in the scientific community because of his years of meticulous study of Maori culture” (ibid.). His research amongst Tuhoe was “probably the most significant early work on Maori because it was clearly conceived by Best as research”, and undertaken with a high degree of anthropological professionalism (ibid., 84). His intermediary role was set, and well understood by Pākehā officials; yet the ways Māori regarded him “has been left largely to anecdote and unrecorded stories”. At this key point, Smith footnotes Sisson’s research in *Te Waimana* (see earlier); without giving particular page references, she relies on his critique of Best to support a valid point. However, the Tuhoe voices in Sisson’s work are still mediated by a Pākehā researcher, as were those in Best’s material - and in the sections relating to the ethnographer written by Sissons, there are no contemporary Tuhoe views of Best by his peers. “Revisting some of Best’s material”, she argues, “ suggests that the people of Tuhoe” reacted variously to him: “openness...generosity...hostility and resistance”(ibid.). We are not told which pieces of his material show this; to illustrate Best’s dependence on gaining the trust “of learned ‘experts’ known as *tohunga* “, she refers the reader to “Elsdon Craig, his nephew and biographer” (ibid.).

The problem here - if one is to *decolonise* methodologies - is that she relies on a relative of Best, who relied on Best himself, to “shed some light on how the people dealt with the researcher”. If we do not know how various Tuhoe saw Best, we are unlikely to discover this third hand from Pākehā ; but we do have evidence from other sources (for example, the writings of Tutakangahau) that she does not appear to be aware of. Material advanced here derives from Craig’s work, via Best’s notebooks and letters, especially those to Percy Smith, where he discussed his relationships with Tuhoe leaders, and his search for the “kura huna - hidden treasure” (see Chapter 3). Smith observes that context was important in this transfer of knowledge: Best was a “powerful friend” to have in a situation where Tuhoe independence was threatened; and the exchange of “highly sacred forms of knowledge for [Tuhoe’s?] sheer physical

survival” she sees as a pragmatic solution to “the encroachment of colonisation” (ibid., 85). This is qualified by the standard claim that “full-scale divulging of things held to be important” did not occur - which appears to contradict the previous claim. If highly sacred knowledge was imparted to Best, how did things held to be important differ from this material? Because no evidence is cited, we cannot tell. The difficulty is that such a qualification arises from a defensive mode: Best obtained some knowledge, but was never given access to the real thing. Best, we are told, gave up “on some pursuits”, by minimizing the importance of the topic, refusing to admit “his failure to discover anything” (ibid.). This comment suffers a similar weakness: no evidence is offered. Nor is there any mention of the massive changes that had taken place in Māori society before Best arrived to do research amongst Tuhoe: Christian literacy, war, land loss and the impact of the money economy. Any assessment of the nature and value of his research amongst Māori needs to acknowledge the difficulties facing his quest for pristine information on traditional Māori society.

Smith’s attempt to reassess Best’s legacy from a Māori perspective, in a decolonising intellectual milieu, is hampered by some radical difficulties that face a researcher of any ethnicity: most of the available primary material is written by Pākehā, in English, and many of the secondary sources as well. Māori viewpoints there are, but mostly in Māori, stored in government archives: letters to officials, their replies and debates and reports in the Māori newspapers. As she observes, “Best lives on as an expert, [and] the names of his informants and the rest of their knowledge lie buried in manuscripts and archives” (ibid.). The unspoken wero (challenge) here is for Smith and her inheritors to unearth the writings of such people, something that will be attempted later in Chapter Six, by examining the literary legacy of his chief informant, Tutakangahau. Another Māori researcher, Danette Marie, chose in her 1999 dissertation on Māori mental health not to use Elsdon Best’s work because of “methodological flaws”(see her Appendix A, 267). In her PhD thesis, “Engaging culture and science : a scientific realist interpretation of Maori mental health”, Marie recognised Best as “one of the most often cited

sources of Maori history in New Zealand" (relying on Jackson, 1967, see following)⁴³ (Marie, 1999). Following Smith's lead, Marie relies on two Pākehā thesis writers, Jackson (1967)⁴⁴ and Groube (1964)⁴⁵ to back her assertion of theoretical deficiencies and faulty methods. Citing Jackson's excellent summary of "Best's ethnographic method" she summarises six features to test the reliability of his findings: the lateness of his work after contact with Europeans ("120 years") is the first; Tuhoe were atypical of Māori as "a non-agricultural and non-fishing tribe"; he relied on mission-educated "informants rather than direct observation"; he was preoccupied with an essentialist quest for the " 'original Maori tradition' and Semitic linkages; he had no "identified theoretical framework", no "functional or structural analysis", favouring "a recording of meaning over action"; and tried to record a traditional system when faced with one that was actually "emerging...providing a static, absolute, and idealistic description of Maori social structure" (ibid.).

Marie's co-option of Jackson - and Groube - provides her with a more solid basis to launch a critique of Best, than does Smith's more assertive and derivative mode. While we must question whether Tuhoe neither planted nor fished (where and when, mountain or river valley?), Jackson's points are well made and accord with much of what this study has found so far. Marie is careless in attributing the genesis of "the 'lore of the whare wananga' " to Best, "in large part aided by Percy Smith" and misspells the important informant, Te Whatahoro as "Whatahora" (sic). While Best was at first an unwilling convert to the Io thesis, and later became a believer and proponent, it was Percy Smith who laid the foundation with *The Lore of the whare*

⁴³ A serious bibliographic index of Best citations would be revelatory: a recent search on GoogleNZ produced over 10,000 hits, many pages of which, randomly sampled, were to a Best literary citation or bibliographic entry. A further search on Google Books produced 475 pages. (5-12-2005)
<http://books.google.co.nz/books?q=%22+Elsdon+Best%22&hl=en&lr=&sa=N&tab=wp>

⁴⁴ Jackson, M, "Literacy, communications and social change: the Maori case, 1830-1870." MA Thesis, University of Auckland (1967).

⁴⁵ Groube, L.M., "Settlement patterns in pre-historic New Zealand", MA Thesis, University of Auckland (1964).

wananga: (I&II), in 1913 and 1915 (*ibid.*, 268). Further points derived from Jackson's thesis relate to the influence of Christianity amongst Tuhoe (see Chapter 6), and the ways in which Māori themselves "would have been engaged in a process of active syncretism" in all spheres, creating an impact on "Maori social structure [of] both dissonance and confusion" (*ibid.*, 270). In other words, the Tuhoe world Best encountered was already deeply affected by Pākehā belief systems, culture and technology. She cites Groube's archaeological observation (1964) that "the political economy of pre-contact Maori societies would not have been able to support Best's main contentions" (*ibid.*). According to him, early ethnographers (Cook and Banks) offered descriptions, but "Best was the first major 'reconstructor' of a conceptual Maori 'tradition' ". He and his inheritors - including "Te Rangi Hiroa and Raymond Firth" - failed to "make and maintain a distinction between pre-historic and historic conditions of Maori social structure" (*ibid.*, 271). Māori social mobility, in this reading, would not have been able to maintain a large, hierarchical, esoteric priesthood, with static learning institutions of any size (whare wānanga). Both Best and Smith denied that "extensive structural change had occurred" for Māori, and that meeting house development - on the "School of Learning" model - was "probably 19th century" (Jackson, 1964, 79). The "supposed sanctity and secrecy of the cults also offered an expression of common identity to Maori" reflecting the massive social changes that had reconfigured Māori society in the 19th century.

Marie's critique rests on Best's psychological needs influencing his theorising, such as it was: "Best projected his own covert and seemingly indelible impressions of Maori history and thought back to Maori" (Marie, 274). According to this analysis, Best helped to create the image of large scale whare wānanga, secretly teaching monotheistic doctrines to initiates, instituted from time immemorial by "Io the parent", whose doors had now closed, with the "ira atua (divine life)" and the "mana (prestige)" having gone forever (Best, 1974:31, cited on 274). Speculative as psycho-biography must be - the author believes that hers is plausible - some form of creative licence on the basis of his writings is perhaps the only way to achieve any understanding

of his motives. Her citation above is from Best's 1923 Dominion Museum Monograph No. 6, *The Maori School of Learning: its Objects, Methods and Ceremonial* - but Marie makes no reference to its possible source. Best was notorious for not referencing his material, but immediately prior to the section she quotes, is this:

In a speech of lamentation made by a pundit of Takitumu some 60 years ago [i.e., 1863-65] is noted a deep regret at the passing of the *whare wananga* of his ancestors. For that revered House of Learning has gone forever (Best, 1923, 31).

Marie's quote begins on the following line, attributing all of this psychic material to Best - unaware that he is paraphrasing Te Matorohanga's words, as passed on by Te Whatahoro, a scribe at the Papawai hui undertaken in the Wairarapa in the 1860s, and the basis of Smith's 1913 texts. More to the point, as this study will attempt to show, Best was in fact deeply identified with the old Māori tohunga (see Chapter 5). He saw Te Matorohanga - and "the old time Maori" - as men out of time, like himself. Best copied the old man's ōhaki (death bed speech) into his 1911-1913 notebooks, and according to Craig (1964) was reciting them at the end of his life, at the very point of death. Best may be methodologically deficient when viewed from the framework of modern social science practices, but at heart, he appears to be an elegist for both a vanishing Māori - and Pākehā - frontier culture. His literary style - which she also disparages, along with other more recent critics (Marie, 260) - may be more sympathetically viewed as a kind of genre-bending Romanticism, penned by a tough saw-miller with the survivalist psychology of the roustabout he was in both the backwoods of the USA and the Urewera bush. Best's rebel psyche, his fierce, proud intelligence and wiry physique were ideal equipment to ensure his fifteen year survival amongst Tuhoe. They understood what he was made of, and amongst them a respect endures to the present, in spite of their reservations as discussed below.

The remainder of this section on Māori responses to "Te Peehi" examines a number of Tuhoe voices from a recent television programme about him, made for the TV One Māori documentary series *Waka Huia*, by a Tuhoe producer,

Hemana Waaka, and shown in June, 2005 (Waaka, 2005). Written commentary on Best's work by Tuhoe has not been easy to access. The educationalists in this documentary are well-known academics and teachers, yet there is little published commentary. An exception is *Nga Taonga o Te Urewera*, a research report on the history of intellectual and material property belonging to Tuhoe - and its appropriation and use by non-Tuhoe - written by two members of the iwi, Ngahuaia Te Awekotuku and Linda Waimarie Nikora (Te Awekotuku, 2003). In the recording and publishing of Tuhoe history they ask, "where are the Tuhoe voices?" (ibid., 81). Two recent doctoral dissertations by Tuhoe and others in progress do not disguise the fact that most of the research and commentary - especially in the Waitangi Tribunal Treaty Claims process - is being done by non-Tuhoe, most often Pākehā.⁴⁶ Best is one of their prime targets, in asking who owns and benefits from such research - a "legacy that may be challenged, and yet revered as well". There is no extensive analysis of his work or influence - "one of the world's most prolific gentlemen-scholars" - yet he is seen as providing "a starting point for discourse, further research, and earnest, necessary debate" (ibid., 27). Reverence and challenge are certainly two of the main themes in the strands of kōrerō (discussions) that emerge from the video, "Te Peehi".

In Waaka's documentary, Best is respected for his commitment to the task he set himself, but his findings are consistently challenged, especially as to how accurately he recorded whakapapa - seemingly the mainstay of the histories spoken of here. The following remarks attributed to various speakers were taken down by the author, as translated by Jeanette King, while watching the video and rewinding often to ensure the accuracy of certain important statements.⁴⁷ Tamati Kruger saw Best as the first professional anthropologist in this country, ostensibly paid by Percy Smith to work on the road, but sent in fact to gather ethnographic materials. To Tama Nikora, he was a collector of stories, and by listening long and hard, did "an amazing job" that could not

⁴⁶ Such as Judith Binney and Cathy Marr. See Chapter 6 on Tutakangahau.

⁴⁷ See Chapter Appendices, Chapter One, for an edited transcript. Speakers are: Hemana Waaka, Pou Temara, Tamati Kruger, Wharehuia Milroy, Tama Nikora, Te Umu and Bill Williams, and the author.

be done today. Te Umu and Bill Williams - descendants of Tutakangahau - also speak of him with respect, especially of his skills in bushcraft: “he built his own whare, milled his own timber”. It is notable that these kaumatua (elders) are local leaders who have not experienced academic life and training, as have Pou Temara and Wharehuia Milroy - who lead the challenge party. Milroy spoke of Best in the Native Land Court, “fired up by the idea of finding out what life was like for the indigenous people” and wanting to enhance his own reputation by writing down information. Tuhoe had been little recorded and were regarded as “the real deal - genuine Māori” (as in cultural survivals from the pre-contact era).

Pou Temara also takes up this theme, citing Best’s time as a Secretary to the Urewera Commission (1896-1903). He says Best found out about whakapapa in the process of ascertaining local claims to land tenure. This enthralled him, these “kernels of knowledge” - but some say he got the whakapapa wrong. Temara objects to this, on the grounds that while acting as scribe, Best would only have written down what he heard; either the kaumatua got their whakapapa wrong, or they were misleading the Commission. His ability in taking down the Māori language is not in dispute here - mention is made of his rapid shorthand scheme elsewhere - and according to Milroy, although not a native speaker, he was extremely fluent: “Ko te reo Māori tangata whenua rawa atu”. Temara later claims that Best’s spoken Māori in formal situations - such as whaikōrero at powhiri, speeches of welcome - was not as good as he thought it was. He was proud and vain - “whakahihī” - often getting up to speak when other Pākehā came to visit the area, when there were far more eloquent speakers available, rich in their knowledge and deployment of whakatauāki (proverbs, sayings). According to Temara, this was all to increase his own mana (status). Yet Milroy respects Best’s determination to live close and simply with Tuhoe under conditions of hardship, and says he was used by them as a scribe to translate Māori into English when necessary.

They both maintain he wasn't "told everything" - for example, Milroy's tupuna, Paitini, was a major informant, rich in tribal history, yet withheld much from Best. He knows this because "some of the things written down by my ancestor he didn't give Best, because they're not in Best's work but I have them. They're not the same as the ones he gave to Best". He gives the teachings on the high god Io as an example: he has a book written by a Waikaremoana ancestor "with Io in the whakapapa", which didn't come from any biblical or Pākehā source. This koroua told Best about Io, but he couldn't believe "a Māori mind could have this idea" - he didn't want to touch it.⁴⁸ He also tells of hearing koroua in the 1960s and 1970s who were children of Best's informants and some had even seen him. They said "some of the stories in the book (*Tuhoe*) aren't the same as the ones we've heard in the villages" - so Milroy thinks Best must have "put his own spin on these kōrero, a long time after he wrote the book". He has heard a lot of disagreement about the whakapapa Best recorded in *Tuhoe*: "if anyone followed one of these, they'd get it wrong. We have to follow our own whakapapa books". Temara concludes by saying if Best was as whakahīhi (proud and vain) as he has been told, "we can't say he had one foot in the Māori world and one in the Pākehā - if he truly had a foot in the Māori world, he would not have been so proud. He had both feet in the Pākehā world, and he thought he knew a lot more than he actually did".

In these kōrero, Best inevitably emerges as flawed: affirmed on Te Awēkotuku's reverence side of the ledger, but diminished by challenges to his character and abilities. In the way of such oral testimony, there are few references given, that might provide access to further examination of the claims made and historical figures cited, or used in affirmation. These questions lie ahead in the ongoing research project that Best's work, and other *Tuhoe* and Māori histories invite. What the video discussion does show is that the Pākehā ethnographer lives on in *Tuhoe* kōrero as a mythic, embattled ancestor figure who can never be fully embraced nor wholly done without. A

⁴⁸This doesn't accord at all with what Best wrote on Io: he vigorously defends the Māori conception of Io in multiple publications.

more mature and less contentious balance may be arrived at in a later generation when historical grievances have been settled as best they can be, and Tuhoe experience themselves in control of their of own destinies, and their richly documented past.

Conclusion:

This chapter has reviewed a body of literature relating to colonial discourse theory; and the historiography of 19th century anthropology - as it relates to the New Zealand setting - and its central place in the history of ideas and the subsequent culture wars between religion and science. It has examined the historical critique of Best amongst Tuhoe and his “magnum opus”, the eponymous two-volume study of the Urewera iwi. There has been an effort to locate contemporary and historic Māori and Tuhoe voices, allowing them to speak about Best, while analysing the responses of all contributors - to set this important 19th century scholar of things Māori in the context of his times. As a cultural history - the history of ideas - the aim has been to show Best’s place in the ongoing discourse of postcolonial criticism, and how well - or badly - the ethnographer has been served so far. A further aim has been to place this thesis in a critical context; to establish the area under observation and the scope of my own critique. It is apparent that such a major figure - controversial, flawed, limited, encyclopaedic, a massive source of reference and an ongoing influence in views of traditional Māori society - has not been taken seriously enough by our writers of historical critique. Such beginnings as have been made - while welcome - have not taken on this seminal writer, this tipuna (ancestor) with the breadth and depth necessary to evaluate his deposit in the shared cultures of this country.

Debates about syncretism, nationalism, essentialism and theologies of ethnic fundamentalism circle around the lives of men such as Best in the decolonising and globalising milieux of the early 21st century: “Anthropology is both a syncretizing and creolizing discourse (as the translation and/or invention of culture) and a discourse about syncretism” (Stewart & Shaw,

1994, 22). The role of anthropology in the intellectual history of New Zealand, and its place in creating libraries, wherein identity and traditions may be sourced and re-forged, is in urgent need of further study. Best's work provides a unique archive and body of published work; those he recorded have also left their own words: in letters, Māori language newspapers and government papers. The ways in which Māori have accommodated Pākehā in their own ontological spheres, and the settlers in turn have attempted to re-invent their hosts and relocate them in historical time, open up new spaces of research and understanding. This requires the ideological identity needs of the descendants of the Treaty signatories to be slowly and carefully acknowledged; making it less and less necessary to approach the historical record with prejudicial anger, guilt or fear.

While Best may have sought in vain for what Swain has called "ontological ontology (the very being of being)", his inheritors - with learned humility - need not "adjudicate on the 'true' nature of [Māori] existence", but perhaps content themselves with a more realistic goal: "hermeneutic ontology (the interpretation of being)" (Swain, 1993, 2). What can the written record tell us, of what it was like to be Māori, Tuhoe, Tutakangahau; to be Pākehā, to be Best, in the dying years of the 19th century and the first decade of the 20th? To approach it requires careful scholarship, a sympathetic imagination - and rueful acknowledgment of the visa limitations restricting entry to the past, that "other country". As Swain notes of Aboriginal history, in this "thriving new industry", Australian historians, rooted in their own ontological view of "time and history", have failed to turn this new field of study "into an encounter with the Aboriginal understanding of being" (ibid., 3-4). The same lacunae - facing, seeing and hearing each other, kanohi-ki-kanohi - await those Māori and Pākehā who attempt to address the limitations this study contemplates, and evidences.

Chapter 2. Early intellectual influences on Best – visions of the primitive mind.

Thus, on the definite basis of compared facts, ethnographers are able to set up a rough scale of civilisation. Few would dispute that the following races are arranged rightly in order of culture:- Australian, Tahitian, Aztec, Chinese, Italian (I, 23-24) (Tylor, 1873, I, 23-24).

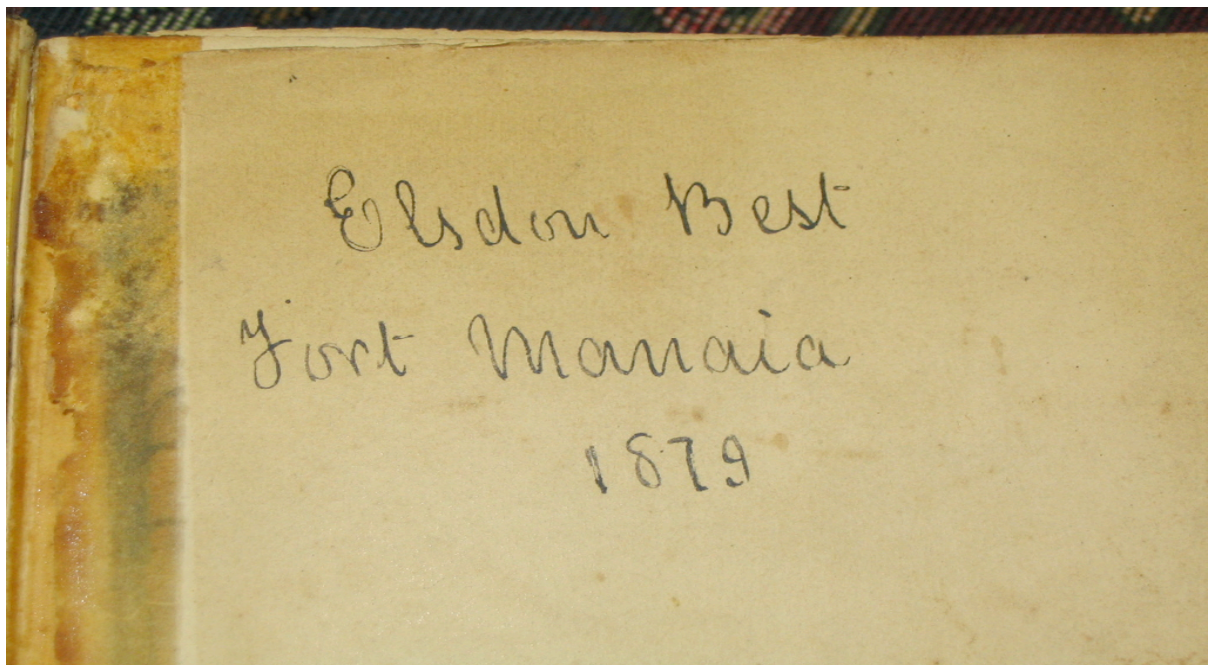


Fig 1. Best's signature and date, personal copy of the Rev Taylor's *Te Ika a Maui* (Taylor, 1855).

This chapter will examine local and overseas sources of Best's thinking and their influence on him, as he began to develop theoretical positions on culture, civilisation and the primitive.⁴⁹ The problem addressed here is our present lack of knowledge about him in this vital area. Through the theoretical lenses discussed in the previous chapter, reading his texts closely in chronological order, the hypothesis of

⁴⁹ Best's basic understanding of culture, in the ethnographic sense, was Tylolean: a complex whole covering all the "habits acquired by man as a member of society", in an hierarchical model of human progress (Tylor, 1873, I, 1).

international influences will be tested. The aim will be to explore Best's assumptions about culture, as reinforced by scholarship he accessed from the mid - to late nineteenth century debates on the nature of culture and civilisation. In entering into this evolving discourse, he was an agent of and subject to Western cultural norms. The chapter addresses the issue of how far he accepted the major socio-cultural evolutionary models as scientifically sound, and was bounded by their limitations and his own preconceptions. Best's engagement with Māori, ostensibly to understand and record their culture, may well reveal his own cultural determinants.

Best's use of the anthropological debates surrounding him is examined, to better understand his exemplary position as a colonial ethnographer in New Zealand at the turn of the 19th century; his fieldwork and later, curatorial role, helped to define a developing academic model of the working anthropologist. His influences divide into two main periods: up until 1910, his formative reading, fieldwork and notes and early articles; and from 1911-1931, his time as ethnographer at the Colonial (Dominion) Museum until his death. Material in the earlier period considered here comes from his school day readings on natural science, his early interest in Māori, the Taranaki connection with S. Percy Smith, Edward Tregear, and W.E. Gudgeon,⁵⁰ his time working in America (1883-1886), and the period up to 1895 when he left for the Urewera (including the founding of the Polynesian Society, 1891-1892).

Craig notes two books read by Best before he left school: Louis Figuier's *The World before the Deluge* (in Craig as *The World's Deluge*, 20), and Robert Chambers' *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation*. Figuier's *La terre avant le deluge* was first published in 1863; it became immensely popular and was often reissued and translated (first English translation, 1865). Figuier included a unique series of restorations of periods of the earth's past, drawn by Edouard Riou (Rudwick, 1992, 173-218). Figuier was a populariser of science whose writings were based on the researches of others. His works were hugely successful on a world stage – and despite his “floods” being natural catastrophes (there were two, rather than one),

⁵⁰ Best's own copy of the Rev. Richard Taylor's *Te Ika a Maui* (1870), is signed by him and inscribed, “Fort Manaia, 1879”. It dates from the period when he served in the Armed Constabulary in Taranaki, and met these fellow Māoriphiles, who later went on to found the Polynesian Society. See Chapter Appendix, “Best's Annotations”.

God or Providence was not discounted. The flood of Noah was seen as a local (Middle Eastern) event (Figuier, 1865, 407-431). He aimed to convert academic research into material accessible to the young: this book (almost certainly the one Craig calls *The World's Deluge*) was bought for seventeen shillings and sixpence worth of saved pocket money by the young Elsdon,⁵¹ before he left school at age fifteen⁵² (Craig, 1964, 20). Figuier was creationist when it came to humanity (and monogenist also, attributing racial variation to climate). He defined human difference over and against animal nature by the peculiar faculty of abstraction: "We will say then, that man is an *intelligent* being, gifted with the faculty of comprehending the *abstract*". (Figuier, 1865, 409) The question of whether "savage" and "barbaric" peoples possess this human trait is central to Best's adult analysis of the primitive.

Robert Chambers' *Vestiges of the natural history of Creation* (1844) contained arguments for evolution, and a chapter on anthropology (Chambers, 1887). The book's thesis was so controversial that Chamber's authorship was not revealed until his after his death forty years later; Darwin noted that *Vestiges* had prepared the ground for the acceptance of his work on natural selection.⁵³ While I have no direct evidence of Best citing Chambers, there are a number of vital planks in his adult thinking that appear in the *Vestiges*.⁵⁴

1. An hierarchical view of human development on a progressive model.
2. A monogenist view of human origins, with an Indian birthplace posited for humanity.
3. A middle-class view of civilisation, with leisure, art and property rights seen as essential to a developmentalism which had Caucasians on the top rung of human progress.

⁵¹ Graham Howard of the Reserve Bank of New Zealand comments, " [this] works out to be (very) approximately \$92.00 using unofficial CPI data between 1871 and 1920". Email to author, 5.11.2003.

⁵² NB. Unless otherwise referenced, biographical notes that track the chronology of Best's reading are from Craig's biography, *Man of the mist*. (1964). Those sections where this writer has seen original material (e.g. Best's Urewera letters to S. Percy Smith) do show that Craig has used those sources accurately, working from primary materials

⁵³ For a full account of the origins of Chamber's book, see Secord, James A., *Victorian Sensation* (Chicago University Press, 2000).

⁵⁴ See Chapter Appendix A, for a fuller account.

4. A rationale for colonialism, in which the superior races supplant the inferior.
5. A qualified diffusionism, where a human genius supplied by Providence is capable of generating new civilisations that are not necessarily dependent on immigration or conquest for cultural change and material or technological progress. Chambers embraces the psychic unity of humanity, as well as human inventiveness – a type of parallel evolutionism posited in the eighteenth century French enlightenment (Trigger, 1998, 35-36).

These influential works were part of Best's youthful enthusiasms and intellectual precocity; they fit with his later reading and the ideas developed in his mature thinking, providing evidence of the intellectual climate in which he grew up. Chambers, writing as a foundational figure in the heated nineteenth century debates on human origins, gives some indication of the early sources of Best's evolutionist thinking. Craig records that the father, William Best, held family prayers and read a biblical text each Sunday morning, but the young Best seems to have been encouraged to explore the world around him, to make up his own mind, and had open access to "the more weighty books he found in his father's library" (Craig, 1964, 18, 20).

Best left his first job with the civil service after a year, and moved north to Poverty Bay in 1874, where he worked for his brother-in-law, Robert Macdougall, a cattle farmer. He gravitated towards local Māori, learning the language, and beginning his amateur ethnographic activities – or as Craig somewhat romantically puts it, listening to "their tales, their traditions and their song" (ibid., 22-24). He became a bush contractor, but by 1877, an economic depression bankrupted the venture, and he joined the Armed Constabulary in Taranaki, stationed with Number Six Company at Pungarehu (ibid., 25). Best was at Parihaka in 1881: although he was unsympathetic to Māori resistance, he nevertheless continued his studies of their language and culture, encouraged from his arrival in the area by two local Pākehā authorities, S. Percy Smith and Edward Tregear. They "supplied him with books written by the early collectors", including Taylor's *Te Ika a Maui – New Zealand and*

*its Inhabitants*⁵⁵ (ibid., 27). Best's objections to Taylor are a key to his thinking. Craig notes that by this time, Best was disagreeing strongly with the Reverend Taylor on ideological grounds. According to Craig, he rejected Christian explanations outright, but this can be more accurately understood as the orthodox, evangelical Christianity of the missionaries:

Best, who preferred to rationalise on religious questions, accused Taylor of confusing the natural explanations of human origins with ancient mythology. There was, he maintained, no evidence apart from superstition, by which primitive man explained his presence on earth. At the same time, geology, instead of supporting the theory of a divine creation, actually contradicted what was really a modern interpretation of Eastern mythology (ibid., 28).

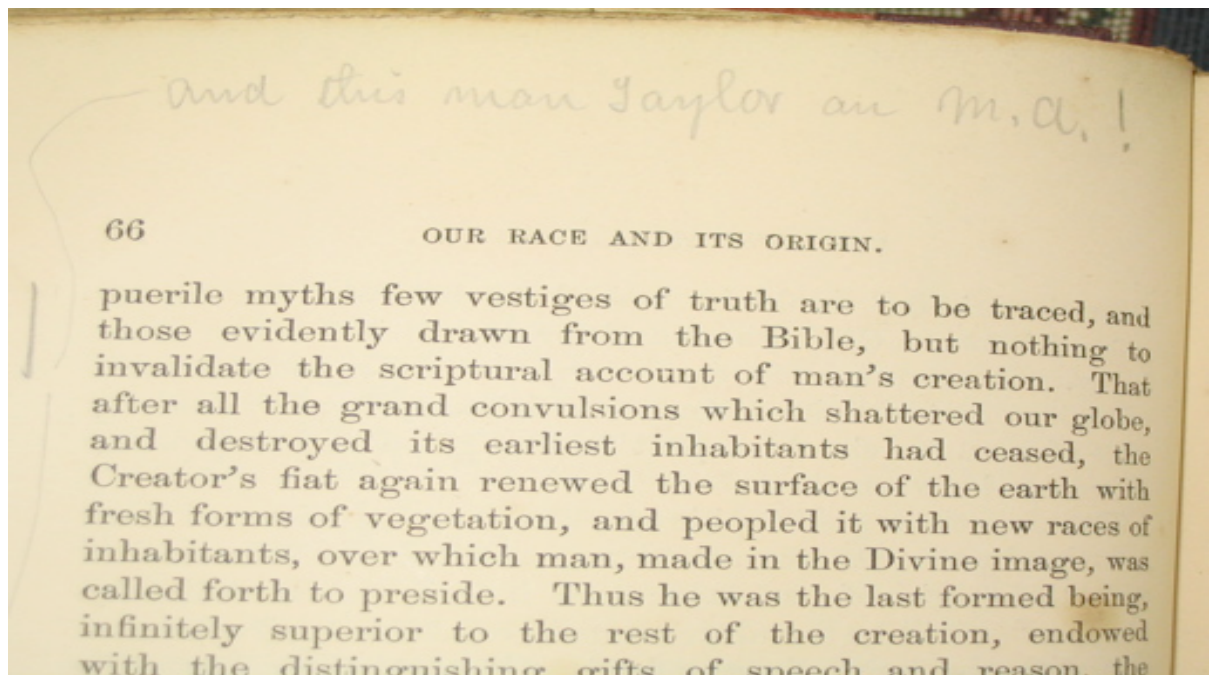


Fig.2. Annotation: "And this man Taylor an M.A.!", on page 66 of Taylor's *Te Ika a Maui*, Best's personal copy (Taylor, 1855, 66).

⁵⁵ Craig notes in an appendix that he consulted an 1870 edition of Taylor, annotated by Best. (239) This book was sold at auction from the estate of Zita Craig, Elsdon Craig's widow, in Auckland, November 2003; it was purchased by Warwick Jordan, a rare book dealer of Auckland, and has been viewed by the author, and the extensive annotations recorded. Mr Jordan has since on-sold the book to another anonymous bidder also contacted by the author. See Chapter Appendix, Best's Annotations.

From the figure above, it is plain what Craig was referring to. The book is signed by Best and dated “Fort Manaia, 1879” - the time of his meeting Smith and Tregear, who were to prove influential mentors. Tregear was also fiercely anti-Christian. His wife had struggled to escape a previous unhappy marriage, due to Anglican strictures on divorce; he had fallen out with local Wesleyans, who forced him into bankruptcy in 1882; and he had become persuaded by F. Max Müller’s writings on comparative religion (so influential later on Best).⁵⁶ These were turning points in Best’s career, and his thinking: he had encountered fellow free-thinkers who shared his passion for things Māori, who both encouraged this bent and his gifts, and provided him with the intellectual armoury to begin taking on missionaries like Taylor. Best’s often sarcastic debate with the cleric, which runs throughout the annotated book, is a key to understanding his intellectual evolution. Looking through his notes in the margin, two main themes emerge: the issue of human origins per se, where he debunks Taylor’s Christian anthropology and his ideas on Māori origins in particular.⁵⁷

Best annotates throughout *Te Ika a Maui*, but those chapters attracting his most intense criticism are Chapter II (“Two Races which peopled Polynesia”, 13-60); Chapter III (“Our Race and its Origins”, pp 61-90); and Chapter V (“Religion”, 97-106). More than anything, it is Taylor’s biblical worldview that exercises Best, especially when the missionary seeks to locate Māori in a post-lapsarian, degenerationalist dispersal and diffusion of mankind. In Chapter II, for example, Taylor is arguing for a pre-Māori, black, Melanesian population, of whom Ngati Mamoe and Moriori were survivals (Taylor, 1870, 17). Best notes as “Rubbish!” the suggestion that under later Christian influences, these groupings had intermingled. He is even more derisory of the suggestion that the later Polynesian migrants had “many traditions” relating the “grand events recorded in Scripture – the Fall, the Flood, the Dispersion, and the Temple”, of which the Melanesians were ignorant. Taylor reasons that this is because Polynesians, coming later, “sprang from a race intimately acquainted with Scripture history, which was unknown to the other” (ibid., 21). Best scribbled out the entire section, adding “Humbug!”. Taylor’s attempt to marry the biblical to the local is not surprising; he was after all, looking to include

⁵⁶ See Howe’s life of Tregear, pp 32-35 (Howe, 1991, 32-35).

⁵⁷ There are of course times when these themes intertwine, as will be seen.

Māori in a Christian scheme of salvation that implied its own history and anthropology. What we see in Best at this point, discounting the personal nature of his retorts, is a rejection of such a schema for a view of humanity discounting the divine fiat.

At a more specific level, Taylor asserted that the Polynesian ancestors of Māori appeared to have “entered the Pacific from the eastern shores of Asia” (ibid., 57). It is here that Taylor’s speculations most closely resemble the positions that Best, Smith and Tregear later came to hold, especially with regard to migration routes and linguistic links. The most telling difference is the issue of degenerationism: Best styles as “Rot!” Taylor’s statement that the Melanesians, displaced by the superior wave of Polynesians entering New Zealand, had “once owned a civilisation equal to his own” (ibid., 57-58). He could make even less sense of the missionary’s claim that the gathering of the white, black and brown sections of “the human family” in the New Zealand of their own time, “should meet together to occupy the same lands and form one people”. In a reference to the apostle Paul’s claims in Acts 17: 26-27 that this human family is divine in origin,⁵⁸ and its historic national boundaries are foreseen and foreordained, Taylor writes that these wanderings are all part of “the grand designs of the Almighty” (ibid., 58). Best underlines this section with a question mark, as if he had no idea whatsoever of what Taylor meant by this. A dispersal of this kind with its implied psychic unity, ending in such Pacific harmony was not in accord with the evolutionary positions Best was adopting. These are next discussed by Taylor in Chapter III, where he outlined his position on human origins.

Te Ika a Maui was first published in 1855, four years before Darwin’s *Origins*, and *without* the chapter on racial origins, which appears in Best’s 1870 edition. Taylor was clearly responding to the debate that had opened up since he first published - “Our Race and its Origins” is a defence of the creationist position. He cites “The Vestiges of Creation” (Best’s early reading) as part of the “speculations of the present age” (ibid., 62); discusses Darwin on “Species”, his ideas of “natural selection” and

⁵⁸ ...“26 - and he made from one [blood], every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times, and the boundaries of their habitation, 27- that they should seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us:” (Acts 17:26-27).

“the struggle for life”; and also mentions Crawford’s theories on varieties of human species (*ibid.*, 67ff). Taylor’s position on these enquiries is straightforward. There are three sources of information: human speculation, geological evidence, and “Scripture records” (*ibid.*, 61). He includes Chambers and Darwin amongst the human speculators, concluding that neither they nor any other human agent “afford any satisfactory information as to the origin of our race” (*ibid.*, 65). The geological record, in Taylor’s view, proved both a recent creation of humanity, and their original state of perfection. Upon reading the following Best could not contain his disgust:

But what geology affirms, God’s holy word declares, and in plain and simple terms gives an account of our creation, which is both consonant with reason and geology (*ibid.*,).

Taylor champions here the ancient Biblical record over all other antique accounts, whose “puerile myths” contain only vestiges of truth, and that too derived from Scripture: “Bosh!” is Best’s response. For the missionary, the Flood was an historical reality, after which God again peopled the earth with beings made in His own image who as “viceregents” continued to exercise dominion over the earth up to the very moment of Taylor’s writing (*ibid.*, 66). Best explodes at such claims: “And this man Taylor an M.A.!” (see Fig. 2). Whatever class-consciousness might lie beneath this remark (the auto-didact finds out the don), it is obvious that Best regards all of this as patently unscientific, and out of step with the new spirit of his age. While we do not have at this point a clearly articulated version of what Best does think, we certainly know what he rejects; and by implication, his attraction to alternative anthropological discourses.

Chapter III continues on the dispersal of the sons of Noah: in essence, it sets out the degenerationist case, assuming the psychic unity of humanity, and concludes with the Japhetic mission to enlighten the descendants of Shem and Ham, both through the word of God and the benefits of civilisation (*ibid.*, 87-90). In New Zealand, the European missionary occupied the “office of the world’s teacher, the great dispenser of God’s will” – Japheth’s seed preaching the gospel to his Māori brother, descended most likely from Ham (*ibid.*, 90). Best retorts: “Myths” and “Rot!” (79); “not reliable” (80); “no good” and “myth” (81); and “Rubbish” (82) to Taylor’s argument that

Māori have fallen from a former state of civilisation, but are now being brought back into the fold. Whole sections are scribbled out in a form of schoolboy zeal to correct the master.

A similar treatment is accorded to the arguments in Chapter V, on “Religion”, where Taylor’s several instances of Christian analogues in Maori myth are serially debunked with the dismissal, “Alas! The trail of the missionary is over it all”. This refers specifically to Taylor’s argument that Christian truths may be discerned “even in the Māori myths” (ibid., 100-101). This attempt to discover elements of kinship – in many ways, not so different from Best’s later adherence to the existence of Io, the Supreme Being in Māori cosmogony – was at that point in his thinking a prime example of the traits which disqualified missionaries from practising ethnography, and the scientific recording of other cultures. Best sincerely wished to study Māori for themselves, as they were; he genuinely appears to have valued what they had to offer. There is a significant historical irony in his rejection of missionary thinking. To enter a rationalist modernity, he had to distance himself from special revelation and a biblical anthropology of humanity; at the same historical moment, Māori were entering modernity through the portal of Christian literacy – an inheritance he was leaving behind. The potential for conflict lay in these mutually opposed cultural shifts: that Best would miss the significance of the contemporary Māori experience in his search for an essentialised “Māori mind”, existing prior to European contact, and persisting untouched at some mysterious level. The irony is sharpened further as it later becomes obvious that his view of himself as a social scientist opposed to religion is belied by his transcendentalist religious temperament. In these responses to Taylor, we have the earliest outline of his positions in the great argument between Western science and the received views of Christianity.

On the basis of these annotations, it is possible to gain some perspective on Best’s thinking in the early 1880s. During his time with the Native Constabulary at Pungarehu, Tregear and Smith had given him a number of the works of the early collectors - Taylor’s was one of them. In “A Survey of Maori Religion and Mythology: Evidence of Early Writers” (Part II of his *Māori Religion and Mythology: Part I*, 1924), Best lists a number of possible pre-1880 influences, that

would likely have been among those titles. As this list was compiled forty-five years later, there is no certainty about which books he had read at this time.⁵⁹ He makes a disparaging remark there about the missionary Buller, in his *Forty Years in New Zealand* (1878), commenting on the lack of religion among Māori: “Yet this man was a native linguist, and one of those on whom we depend for our ethnographical data!” (Best, 1924, 48). While this clearly accords with what he wrote earlier on Taylor, it may simply be evidence of a long-held belief. There is however enough material available to show that Best was in the process of developing an evolutionary perspective on human history and social development; in discounting the orthodox biblical account, he was aligning himself with the emerging socio-cultural evolutionists such as Tylor, whose influence is apparent by the time of his first major published work ten years later.

In 1883, Best left for America, en route to Argentina, to join his sister and brother-in-law Macdougall (after preparing himself by learning Spanish, via “mother-wit and the help of a few simple books”)⁶⁰ (Craig, 1964, 31). Best spent much of his time in the south-west United States, in Spanish-speaking areas such as Texas and New Mexico, and six months of that period in New Orleans at the time of the World Fair (1885). Unable to go south through Mexico due to a civil war, he returned to New Zealand the following year – having increased his facility with Spanish to the degree that by 1892, he was able to comment on Spanish historians, travel writers and ethnographers, some of whom were only available in the original. This is the genesis of his first article in *The Journal of the Polynesian Society* (1892), “The races of the Philippines”.⁶¹ There he sets out detailed theoretical positions (albeit

⁵⁹ The list contains Buller (1878); Colenso (1878); Cruise (1823); Dieffenbach (1843); Marshall (1836); Nicholas (1817); Savage (1807); Shortland (1851,1854); Thomson (1859); Wöhlens (1874); and Yate (1835).

⁶⁰ Craig relates that Best had suffered the loss of his three sisters in a year: Edith, Gudgeon’s wife, died of tuberculosis, followed nine months later, by Katherine, the youngest and Best’s favourite. Isabel’s leaving for South America eventually prompted her depressed brother to follow, on what became a three-year OE (he returned in June, 1886) (Craig, 1964, 30-40).

⁶¹ Craig notes that Best put “his knowledge of Spanish to good use” in this paper, “based on information he had sought from anthropologists in South America”; and also that it contained “hitherto unpublished records left by the early Spanish voyagers. His translations of extracts from these papers were probably unique in Polynesian studies” (Craig, 1964, 48). Best’s contribution was considered significant enough to bear reprinting in an edited collection on Philippine history and nationalism in 1925. See: Craig, Austin (ed.), *Pre-*

unsystematically) on culture, civilisation, and primitivism. Best, in constituting himself as ethnographer, had entered into what Stocking has called the “central intellectual problem” of the late nineteenth century: anthropology (Stocking, 1963, 2). Human origins and human physical and cultural differentiation became an ideological frontline in a colonial century where evangelicalism and technological advances confronted native and settler with real and imagined Others.

“The races of the Philippines” appears at a critical point in the theorising of Māori and their possible extinction. The Polynesian Society was founded in Wellington on 8 January 1892, for the study and preservation of all things related to Polynesia. In 1897, The Young Māori Party was formed by the most active Māori graduates of the Anglican boarding school at Te Aute. Pākehā (such as Smith, Tregear and Best) were the driving force in the former, an exercise in salvage anthropology (although there were some early Māori members and many informants). Percy Smith had conceived the idea of a New Zealand branch of an unofficial, worldwide network of colonial collectors, dedicated to gathering vanishing cultural information of native peoples in subject territories.⁶² Māori leaders such as Apirana Ngata and Te Rangi Hiroa (Peter Buck) guided the reformist agenda of the Young Maori Party, seeking to bring their people back from a predicted extinctionary fate,⁶³ through health reforms and agricultural development, including retaining and capitalising Maori land.

Ngata believed Māori had a future, but – in terms of authentic cultural survival at least – Best did not. He had resigned himself to their disappearance, and his renewed interest in anthropology on his return from America came from “a desire to perpetuate their memory rather than help with their rehabilitation” (Craig, 1964, 43). Best had seen first hand the decimation of some Native American peoples during his American sojourn. He noted the fate of “a new messiah of the Sioux of Pine Ridge Agency”, who “did not flourish long, but died with great suddenness – of lead

Spanish Philippine History and the Beginnings of Philippine Nationalism, National Book Company, Manila, 1925.

⁶² “Salvage” or “urgent” anthropology, was so-called because of the haste believed necessary to rescue what was about to vanish under a “fatal impact” philosophy.

⁶³ The prediction was wrong, as at the time, Māori numbers were increasing. Ideas on extinction, in constructing a view of “primitive Māori”, will be examined later in the chapter.

poisoning". His career was "cut short by a 45.60, and many of his friends accompanied him on his departure" ⁶⁴ (*CT*, 1906, 62). This hard-bitten pragmatism when dealing with native peoples in the present, contrasting with a valorised view of their vanishing past was part of Best's psychology in a trail that runs from Parihaka in 1880 to Maungapohatu in 1916. Māori had played their part in advancing the cause of progress, but their hour had come and gone, and it behoved the science of anthropology to explain such "higher laws". Craig quotes an unsourced newspaper article to illustrate Best's attitudes at the time: "Through the channel of that inscrutable law of Nature which we term the survival of the fittest, man is slowly working out his redemption on earth" (Craig, 1964, 44).

By the early 1890s, Best had been converted to such utopian, progressivist thinking, with its echoes of Herbert Spencer. By 1892, he had certainly read Lubbock, another progressive utopian, citing him in "The races of the Philippines". ⁶⁵ In articles entitled "Te Whanganui-a-Tara: Wellington in pre-Pakeha Days, Nos II-IV", published in the *New Zealand Times*, c. July-November 1894, Best speaks of human migrations involving "far separated peoples, Goth and Aboriginal, Vandal and Polynesian...obeying that old, old law of Nature – the survival of the fittest". (III) And again,

To the anthropologist it seems a mournful thing to contemplate the extinction of a race, and to know that the land shall see them no more, that their origin, history, language, arts and achievement are lost beyond recall. Yet it is he who loves to study the human race and to note their gradual advancement and intellectual development, who can see most clearly that, be they never so savage, each division of mankind which appears and runs its course on this

⁶⁴ *Canterbury Times*, July 4, 1906. "Sketches from Tuhoeland. The Darkened Mind" (62). Best recounts this incident in a passage that depicts Rua Kenana as a charlatan.

⁶⁵ "The primitive condition of mankind was utter barbarism, from that state, certain races independently raised themselves." Best cites this as from Lubbock's *Early Conditions of Mankind* (18, 1892). This should refer to *The origin of Civilisation and the Primitive Condition of Man* (1870), p 323, where Lubbock (as Best notes) is arguing in refutation of Whateley.

earth, is surely fulfilling a great law of Nature,⁶⁶ and is a necessary link in the endless chain of Human Progress (IV).

If we are not to dismiss these statements as mere crocodile tears, we need to account further for modes of thinking which can genuinely mourn ethnic extinction and yet embrace the process that supposedly – inevitably – brings it about. Best's personality, a combination of the dissenting bookworm and frontier pragmatist was certainly a factor. His active intelligence in a pioneering colonial environment gave him a unique opportunity to observe and engage in Pākehā-Māori interactions. Ethnography appears to have been his way of making sense of the situation he saw around him: the relationship of Māori to Pākehā, and finding a language and a framework to discuss their impact on each other. The collection and preservation of Māori traditions (mahi, or deeds, as Grey puts it) and the written recreation of a pre-contact Māori society gave him a purpose, which appears at times to have become a pseudo-evangelical mission.⁶⁷ Where missionaries sought to save Māori souls and "civilise" their converts, ethnographers such as Best set out to record the "ancient culture" such souls were losing. Mahi (deeds) becomes myth, and karakia (charms, spells) become incantations: blueprints for action, as exhibits in the museum of comparative mythology.

Best's version of "social Spencerianism"⁶⁸ was a frame for Pākehā to rationalise the political outcomes of colonisation for Māori, and while he may not be as nuanced, nor as explicit as the English sociologist, his thinking echoes Spencer's, whose

⁶⁶ According to Stocking, Spencer had moved by the early 1850s to a biologisation of morals, discussing human adaptation, where "Nature replaced God as the active force". It was her "stern discipline" that chastised the race. This was the great mechanism of human progress. By 1894, Best is writing a paraphrase of Spencer. (Stocking, 1987, 132-133).

⁶⁷ Best was a confirmed bachelor, until his late forties marriage to Adelaide Wylie in the Urewera, in December, 1903. See Craig, pp 97-104.

⁶⁸ See, *The Evolution of Society: selections from Herbert Spencer's Principles of Sociology*, ed, Carnerio (1967), pp xliii-lvii. Carnerio argues that the term "social Darwinism" is not nuanced enough, and that Spencer's laissez-faire philosophy did not invalidate his observations as a pioneering sociologist. See also Bowler: "All too often 'social Darwinism' turns out to be Spencerianism, based on Herbert Spencer's quite different interpretation of the benefits of laissez-faire" (Bowler, 1988, 156ff).

System of Synthetic Philosophy saw evolution, universal in all things, culminating in human ethics⁶⁹ :

The forces which are working out the great scheme of perfect happiness, taking no account of the incidental suffering, exterminate such sections of mankind as stand in their way, with the same sternness that they exterminate beasts of prey and herds of useless ruminants. Be he human being, or be he brute, the hindrance must be got rid of. Just as the savage has taken the place of lower creatures, so must he, if he have remained too long a savage, give place to his superior⁷⁰ (Spencer, 1972, 21).

The Hegelian *Geist* that Spencer presents here is a higher law of perfect individuation, of which men are but the instruments, albeit few are beneficiaries. In this utopia, law and legislatures wither, as each fulfilled individual expands to the limits of his or her potential. “And thus, as before said, in the ultimate man perfect morality, perfect individuation, and perfect life will be simultaneously realised” (ibid., 25). It is for the good of such perfected individuals and the utopian advancement of a fully realised humanity, that “savage” hindrances must be allowed to disappear. Their primitive mentality bars them from advancement (of this, in Best, more later). On this reckoning, allowing Māori to die as the “laws “ of progress dictate is a positive good. While to the 21st century mind, this appears as naked and genocidal self-interest, the questions to be resolved here relate to 19th century intellectual debates.

The founding of the Polynesian Society was to give Best his first real opportunity to publish the results of ten years’ reading of anthropological literature, and early

⁶⁹ See Peel’s introduction to Spencer’s *On Social Evolution*. He notes that while Spencer’s overriding thesis (that the desirable is also the inevitable) has been repudiated, differentiation and advancing social complexity can be seen as contingent, if not necessary forms of social evolution. Spencer’s background as a rationalist from Dissenting middle-class stock, applying theories from the French Enlightenment in response to the Industrial Revolution, his social theorising shaped by the evangelical inheritance he had abandoned – has much in common with that of Best.

⁷⁰ Originally published in *Social Statics* (London, John Chapman, 1851), pp 409-417, 431-432, 468-475.

attempts at fieldwork, since he had first met Smith and Tregear in Taranaki.⁷¹ “The Races of the Philippines” and “Prehistoric Civilisation of the Philippines” appeared together in the first issue of the Society’s journal in 1892. Best employed the comparative method (using living, “savage survivals” as models for past savages): this is the first elaboration of his thinking, in a form of writing approaching a scholarly critique. This two-part article examines the ethnic makeup of the Philippines, describing the aboriginal Aitea and the incoming Tagalo-Bisaya (Malay) peoples - using mainly Spanish sources.

These primitive people are an interesting study on account of their long isolation in a remote group, and it will also be interesting to compare them with the southern branches of the race. Much valuable information on this subject may yet be obtained by our members. Good work has been done by the pioneers of Polynesian ethnology,⁷² but much more remains to be accomplished (Best, 1892, 7-8).

Bearing in mind Best’s lack of a secondary qualification - let alone any tertiary study – he writes fluently at a descriptive level, while his analysis relies on the haphazard accumulation of quotes from various authorities. Why he chose the Philippines is unclear: we know he never went there, but he was certainly familiar with a wide variety of travel, missionary and ethnographic writing in Spanish accounts – a proportion of which seem so specialised, he had to call on his Spanish language skills.⁷³ Best is situating himself as a commentator on comparative anthropology, using his familiarity with this subject area to have himself taken seriously by those he viewed as mentors and peers. These articles are vital to understanding the positions Best had arrived at by the early 1890s, and are evidence of the templates of primitivism and civilisation he was to lay over Māori in his later writings. It would

⁷¹ From 1891 to 1895, Best collected information from his base in Wellington, interviewing elders from his childhood haunts around Porirua, visiting Otaki, the Wairarapa and venturing up the Wanganui River as far as Pipiriki. It was not until S. Percy Smith engineered his appointment as quartermaster with the Lands and Survey department, at Fort Galatea in the Urewera in 1895, that he was able to live amongst Māori (Tuhoe) and engage in sustained fieldwork (Craig, 1964, 45-46).

⁷² Presumably his mentors, Smith and Gudgeon et al.

⁷³ “In reference to the natives of the Philippine Islands the best descriptions are those written in the Spanish language. No reliable, detailed account of them has yet appeared in the work of an English writer.” (Best, 1892, 7).

be fair to say that while he went on to develop and add to these positions, the foundations of his thinking are here. This first article on the racial composition of the Philippines concentrates on the aboriginal Aitea people, and their state of irredeemable savagery; while the two-part piece on the Tagalo-Bisaya illustrates the situation of semi-civilised primitives who have proved “receptive...to the civilisation of [their] conquerors” (Best, 1892, 201). Those more advanced are suitable to assimilation; others less so, hearing from their canyon fastness “the sullen monotone of the distant ocean, their eternal requiem”, await extinction (ibid., 19).

His opening discussion of the Aitea is a précis of themes that were to preoccupy early 19th century Western anthropologists, locked in an environmental or natural determinism: issues of race and racial identity, aboriginality and migration, diffusionism and civilisation, the nature of the primitive, and the equation of civilisation and culture (ibid., 9-14). If immutable laws of Nature could explain cultural difference, then the colonial world order was explicable by science, and amenable to the defence of reason.⁷⁴ Descriptions of racial hierarchies, developmental or evolutionary progress in human culture, and the supplanting of the primitive via conquest by the civilised could be inscribed as social science, and not invasion. The account opens with this statement: “At the time of the Spanish Conquest in the sixteenth century, the Philippines were inhabited by two very different races” (ibid., 9). The historic period – that recorded since Western intervention - begins with conquest and racial classification. The Aitea (or Negritos, Negrillos) were the original inhabitants, gradually displaced and driven to less favourable parts of the archipelago by an incoming wave of migration, a Malayan grouping, the Tagalo-Bisaya. Best cites authorities such as Pickering, Tylor and Crawfurd, in order to classify the Aitea, and open a debate on aboriginality and antiquity. Tylor and other ethnologists have held that the Aitea are “a remnant of a very early human stock”, whereas Crawfurd maintains they are “not traceable to any

⁷⁴ Environmental determinism, as a factor in racial and cultural variation, was nothing new. As Robert Grant has noted, Forster with Cook on the second voyage theorized racial differences as “caused by environmental factors”; later, Dieffenbach was to argue that unlike the more indolent inhabitants of the tropical Pacific, “Maori had had to develop agriculture, while the cooler climate meant they must provide themselves with protective clothing and shelter” (Grant, 2003, 25-26).

common origin". Best leaves the matter open (if not aboriginal, the Aitea were at least the first wave of migration), and moves on to connect them with Melanesian migration, "overtaken at Fiji by a second wave of migration in the form of the Polynesians, who passed them and settled the many islands of the Pacific" (*ibid.*, 10).

Best brings a non-Māori people to the forefront of Polynesian origin debates, universalising the New Zealand focus of the Journal's first issue. For Aitea, we could read Maruiwi/Moriori; for Tagalo-Bisaya, Māori; and for Spanish, the English colonists. This may become more apparent when his later writing on Tuhoe is examined – but it is important here to note that racial typologies and migration patterns go hand in hand with notions of displacement of inferior cultures by those more advanced. He raises conflicting issues with no attempt at resolution: is he simply presenting the positions of Tylor and Crawfurd without comment, or avoiding the implied conflict between notions of aboriginality and migration? It is likely that he believed with Tylor that one could only go back so far in pursuing origins and indigeneity, which is why he comments, "if [the Aitea] were not truly autochthones [they] represent at least the first wave of migration". (10)

Traditional Christian anthropology – Adamic descent for all – was implicitly monogenist, supported by Pauline theology, placing faith in Christ over cultural and ethnic difference, and affirming common human origins.⁷⁵ The comparative method in nineteenth century anthropology (which Best embraced) needed the doctrine of psychic unity (a single human nature) to advance its progressivist argument – thus it maintained the Christian strand of monogenesis. Tylor belonged to this school, although he was no orthodox believer. There were others however (Crawfurd included), who advanced the polygenist argument, "that some races of men were aboriginally distinct and permanently unequal species" (Stocking, 1963, 2). Crawfurd's position enabled him to distance himself from Australian aborigines, for example – the historical record shows the implications of regarding other humans as a sub-species. Tylor's racial hierarchies do not have such a crudely genocidal

⁷⁵ "There is no room for Jew or Greek, there is no room for slave or freeman, there is no room for male and female; you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). "All nations he has created from a common origin (also, 'one blood')..." (Acts 17:26) (Moffat, 1926).

outcome, but his need for a common human nature is predicated on a desire to reconstruct history, in order to prove the superior nature of civilised man over his primitive forebears. In citing these two opponents, Best makes no mention of the reason for their different views, and it is hard to discern what awareness he had of opposing theoretical issues in his sources. The point he seems to miss in the conflict between Tylor's position and Crawford's is the debate between the polygenists and the monogenists, central to racialist anthropology.

Tylor's views on culture – that it is an evolutionary, and consciously moral process – were to become Best's as well. Tylor's famous definition, making "Culture" and a singular "Civilisation" synonymous, posits a humanist and value-laden science of anthropology.⁷⁶ His definition of culture was prescriptive as well as descriptive: Western civilised culture was normative, and part of the "office of ethnography" was to "expose the remains of crude old culture which have passed into harmful superstition, and to mark these out for destruction" (Tylor, 1873, II, 410). His notions of "culture stages and grades of culture" feature prominently in Best's later writing on Māori, and make an early appearance here: "The state of culture which obtains among the Aitea is certainly not of a high standard" (Best, 1892, 12). The discourse of "Civilisation" as developed by the socio-cultural evolutionists was implicitly moralistic in its depiction of savages as inferior to civilised Europeans. Human history (or human progress, seen as one and the same) had presented the ethnographer with a unique opportunity to examine prehistoric man: colonial situations gave rise to pockets of primitivism open for study, and the theorisation of human nature. This conjectural history derived from late eighteenth century ideas of a "natural history" and had the advantage, as Stocking has observed, of being happily ahistorical, especially as it lacked hard evidence:

By comparative study of these societies – the comparison was of course to a European standard – the general history of man's social development could be deduced in the absence of actual historical records. Human history came thus to be viewed as a single evolutionary development... (Stocking, 1968, 114).

⁷⁶ "Culture or Civilization, taken in its widest ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society." (Tylor, 1873, I, 1).

A vital part of this theoretical structure was the essentialisation of the primitive: that there were certain features of man in his savage state rendering him impermeable to change from within and without: “ Primitive man is a savage in the primeval forest and a savage he will remain” (Best, 1892, 14). Best makes this statement at the end of a lengthy analysis of the Aitea’s inability to “advance towards a higher state” (ibid., 13). He came to that conclusion after addressing three major factors defining the primitive: the influence of diffusionism, the development of abstract thought (including a rational conception of the universe), and the psychological determinism inherent in superabundant natural conditions (such as tropical jungles). The progressivist model had to account for variations in levels of culture, particularly as mankind had not developed uniformly, and savages were plainly to be seen existing at the same time as their civilised betters.⁷⁷ Its attempt to reconstruct human history was threatened by the degenerationist model championed by the Anglican Bishop Whately: “if the Eskimo and the Patagonian were the end results of degeneration rather than the starting-points of progress, then the whole attempt collapsed” (Stocking, 1963, 4). Stocking has argued for the necessity of Tylor’s inclusion of religious belief into his evolutionary schema, not allowing critics such as Hannah to exempt “spiritual progress from material progress”,⁷⁸ and snipe at his model from a privileged position (Stocking, 1963, 2-5). From Tylor’s point of view, if the Aitea had fallen from a higher plane, and were not living fossils of humanity’s infancy, then it would be hard to argue for civilised supremacy, when one might not know if one was on the way up - or down.

Best takes his position for granted, however – and applies the measuring rod of diffusionism to the Aitea’s disadvantage. These representatives of the Papuan or Negrito Race “would probably never have raised themselves in the scale of civilisation by their own unaided efforts, even if they had never been forced by invaders to take the position of an inferior people” (Best, 1892, 12). This shows the problems inherent in diffusionist theory, and is evidence of the racial underpinnings

⁷⁷ Tylor acknowledged that civilisations could rise – and fall – but that did not disturb his basic model of savage/hunter-gatherer, barbarian/pastoralist and civilised/literate, city-state, nation. See *Anthropology*. (Tylor, 1895, 18-25)

⁷⁸ See “Matthew Arnold, E.B. Tylor and the Uses of Invention”. (Stocking, 1963, 2-5)

of determinist ethnographies. Best is preparing the reader to accept notions of the innate, irredeemable primitive – and that race is the determinant of culture. Neither by their own efforts, nor through the intervention of external forces, are the Aitea capable of change (and given human history is a history of progress, they are therefore subhuman). Howe, commenting on these imagined laws of progress, suggests “history itself was determined by these laws. History was evolution”. The Aitea were beyond help, because they had reached their upper limit, or were stuck where they began (Howe, 2003, 49). Three recognised ways of cultural change are “independent invention, inheritance from ancestors in a distant region, transmission from one race to another”: it would seem the Aitea lose on each count (Stocking, 1963, 3). They appear frozen at little more than simian level, the implication being that their only response is to retreat like a threatened species to gloomy hinterlands, and await the inevitable.

If some races cannot benefit from contact with those who have managed to achieve independent invention, and transmit the benefits, what prevents them? Unless the observer was able to wait long enough to see change over time, the obvious conclusion would be that some peoples cannot change. Best cites Wallace – “The Papuans have more vital energy than the Malays, and might have advanced as far in civilisation if they had had the same intercourse with civilised nations” – only to express his own doubts about the possibility. He doesn’t see the Papuans or Negrito as capable of advancement, due to innate inferiority – efforts to civilise them having failed (Best, 1892, 12). If some peoples cannot change, what happens to the notion of psychic unity on which the developmental pyramid of man depends, and the possibility of efficacious diffusion also? Monogenesis is also threatened if independent invention, “raising themselves in the scale of civilisation” is not possible for the Aitea: they then become members of an unequal species, as suggested by the polygenists. The implication is that those less than fully human cannot be expected to fulfil human potential – nor be regarded as fellow humans.

Best hedges his bets: while he believes the Papuans have failed to advance, in spite of their efforts, they have also acquired “a few arts of a more civilised life”, in cases where they have “remained in close contact with the dominant race” – but this does

not extend “to the forest tribes”, such as the Aitea (ibid., 12-13). He does not make clear if he intends us to infer the Tagalo as dominant over the Aitea, or the Spanish as dominant over both – but the meaning is clear: diffusionism works for some but not others. Part of his explanation is the obvious fact of primitivism. The inability of savage and barbaric contemporaries to evidence the faculty of abstract thought is a defining quality of the primitive mind.⁷⁹ The Aitea, he is convinced, are qualitatively different to those at the “culture stage of civilisation” - this is clearly stated here in the early 1890s – and never substantially revised. Best’s theoretical foundations are those derived from various overseas writers on ethnography, some of whose positions conflict, but are cited nevertheless because of what he has come to believe about human nature.⁸⁰ He is not an original thinker, but an observer, a collector, in search of a framework into which he can organise his data. The strongest intellectual presence in his work at this point is Tylor, with a clear model of cultural evolution from savage to civilised, and a nineteenth century Western Civilisation equivalent to Culture’s zenith.

In opening his discussion on the evolution of intelligence, Best quotes the French anarchist and ethnographer, Elie Reclus:

The teaching of the superior race is addressed to limited intelligences, utterly destitute of the faculty of abstraction, which same faculty has been developed among ourselves by a long process of culture (Reclus, n.d., in Best, 1892, 13).

Again, the unconscious equation of culture with civilisation situates the primitive below civilised man, and in this case, the evidence is in the former’s intellectual incapacities. Not only does this leave those still in a state of savagery incapable of receiving instruction, it also renders them vulnerable to environmental determinism. Best will go on to argue that certain natural conditions produce a mythology “based upon terror”. This appears to be inextricably linked to primitive man’s inability to

⁷⁹ This becomes a pillar in Best’s later construction of the Māori mind, an essentialised “mythopoetic mentality”. See *The Mythopoetic Māori*: “It is a very remarkable fact that a man in the culture stage of the Māori should possess a more poetic mind than does civilised man” (Best, 1922, 13).

⁸⁰ The hierarchical nature – and moral superiority – of civilisation, i.e. Anglo-European culture was a commonplace. See for instance the founding editorial of *The Lyttelton Times* (January 11, 1851): “Unquestionably the power and importance of the public press is one of the distinguishing features in the social condition of the most highly civilised nations in the old world.” (*Lyttelton Times*, 1851).

reason from cause and effect, or to think in abstractions. They are fixed on a developmental plane of anthropomorphism and personification (this will be developed later, as Best comes under the influence of F. Max Müller,⁸¹ and his theories on the mythopoetic age of mankind).⁸²

The issue of the capacity for abstract thought as a measure of human development was to appear in Best's thinking throughout his career. One immediate difficulty is that abstract thought, or the capacity for abstraction, is rarely defined in these utterances: it is taken for granted that the reader knows what is implied, and therefore, what the lack of such capacity says about the primitive. There is seldom any data presented, as with modern psychological testing; more often, alternatives to Western rationality, the civilised mind, are presented as developed examples of the evolutionary human intellect. Although he is not referred to in this article, it is important to note in this context that Best was to fix on the philological and mythopoetic theories of F. Max Müller.⁸³ Müller's writings on Indo-European languages and their Sanskrit roots were well known in the Pacific by this time. As early as 1869, the Rev. Charles Fraser, arguing for the establishment of universities in the colony, notes that while Latin and Greek should be first on the curriculum, they should not exclude the new "science of language in general, and of universal grammar, as illustrated in the works of Bopp and Max Müller" (Fraser, 1869, 194). Müller himself was in contact with a network of overseas correspondents, including the Rev. Wyatt Gill, for whose 1876 volume *Myths and songs from the South Pacific*, he wrote the preface. His influence on Tregear is well documented by Howe (1991); Tregear's first appearance in *The Transactions, Volume 18, 1885* – "The Maori in Asia" – would not have been lost on Best: "The Maori first crystallised his speech in that mode which the primitive Aryans used perhaps 4,000, perhaps 6,000 years ago" (3).

⁸¹ See e.g. "V. Comparative Mythology" (1856), in *Selected Essays on Language, Mythology and Religion, Vol. I*, (1881), pp 299-451, especially 320, 355-357, 362-365 (Müller, 1881).

⁸² While "the faculty of abstraction" is seldom defined here, it plainly means to theorise the intangible, and posit ideas and ideals beyond individual cases, involving philosophical and mathematical models. Colenso had written earlier - in relation to Māori - that while not approaching the Western degree, they have a "great Ideality", evinced by their "fine perception of the beautiful, the regular, the symmetrical" (Colenso, 1878, 80).

⁸³ See further discussion of Best and Müller in Chapter 5.

Müller's contribution to Best's ideas about primitive peoples and their powers of abstract thought centre around his typology of human development based on language, in the unfolding of a universal history. The first period, the Rhematic, contained the "germs of all the Turanian, as well as the Aryan and Semitic forms of speech", in grammars not "impressed with any individual or national peculiarities". The linking of language and national identity is embryonic here, but significant nonetheless (Müller, 1881, 307). A second period, the Dialectic, has the Semitic and the Aryan leaving the "simply agglutinative, or nomadic stage of grammar"; before the arrival of the "*Mythological* or *Mythopoeic* Age" (ibid.). Müller calls this phase a kind of "Eocene" period in the history of the human mind, before the appearance of the "first traces of any national literature". This mythic period, in the philologist's view, is an illogical hiatus in the otherwise "regular progress of the human intellect". He needs to account for the "irrational" period that produced ignoble and fantastical myths that do not seem to relate to the later heights of Greek thought and philosophy. He examines the Aryan language in this mythopoeic period⁸⁴ before "national separation" (ibid., 355). Müller promises we will see "the mist of mythology" clear away, to "discover behind the shifting clouds of the dawn of thought and language, that real nature which mythology has so long veiled and disguised" (ibid., 358). People in this mythopoeic stage had no conception of abstraction: the word was the thing itself (or nothing at all) – an apprehension of reality by Müller's day mainly confined to poets such as Wordsworth: "Poetry is older than prose, and abstract speech more difficult than the outpourings of the poet's sympathy with nature" (ibid., 363). Modern thought was grey and colourless, compared to that of the ancients, except in the case of those who had not developed to the level of Müller and his educated peers.

We may be able to account for the origin of rain and dew, of storm and thunder; yet to the great majority of mankind, all these things, unless they are mere names, are still what they were to Homer, only perhaps less beautiful, less poetical, less real and living (ibid., 365).

⁸⁴ Müller uses the term "mythopoeic" to describe this age, and in Best, the term is invariably styled "mythopoetic", when referring to Māori. The two seem interchangeable, and appear in this work as and when used by either writer.

Müller was attempting to discover the genesis of the myth-making tendency in humanity in the nature of language itself, and argues that properly understood, each word will reveal its mythological root: "The creation of every word was originally a poem, embodying a bold metaphor or bright conception" (ibid., 383). Although he does not spell this out, the "great majority of mankind" are almost certainly those unacquainted with Western science, as opposed to the "we" who think scientifically, and by implication, abstractly. It is these children of the mythopoeic age – those who went before, and those who lived still in Müller's time, and Best's – whose mental apparatus did not include the power of abstract thought. Living survivals of the childhood of man were invaluable for what they could teach of the age Müller proposed. If Hegel had called the discovery of the "common origin of Greek and Sanskrit the discovery of a new world", Müller was convinced of the same "with regard to the common origin of Greek and Sanskrit mythology" (ibid., 449). He believed that "mythology was "only a dialect, an ancient form of language", and while chiefly concerned with nature, was "applicable to all things". Yet while it touched on the great questions – morals, philosophy, history and religion – it was none of these in substance. Being prior to civilised life, it came before the abstract thought processes that made such life possible. This kind of analysis was to prove a convenient framework for Best and others to differentiate the essential nature of the primitive from the modern.

To return to the article in question, if such primitive peoples were not susceptible to reason, or moral improvement (Best notes that the Tagalo and the Spanish despised the Aitea "on account of their infantile intelligence and crude morality"), then what communication was possible with, and what benefits were available to, their superiors? The answer lay in scientific knowledge:

...But for the very reason of this same primitive state of the intellect they ought to interest us, for they show to us the original state of humanity, the very childhood of the human race (Best, 1892, 13).

The doctrine of developmental "survivors" or "living fossils" is in evidence in the later Best, and in some instances, the language remains almost unchanged from decades earlier. In 1922, we find a song to Hine-maunga described as "a quaint

concept that comes down to us from the childhood of the human race; it is a survival from the Mythopoetic Age.”⁸⁵ (Best, 1922, 9). At the foundational stage of his thinking, he is in line with Tylor and his peers: primitive peoples may be studied fruitfully, for what they can tell us about the origins of the civilised. None of this explains Best’s atavistic attraction to his field of study – nor does it show the power structures that made such anthropology possible.

Best does seem aware that differential developments of those peoples in environments that *should* lead to primitive stagnation, raise objections to theories of stasis. The argument that savagery is induced by topography (e.g. Australian aborigines trapped in sterile desert country) should not apply to the Aitea, surrounded by natural abundance. He cites Whately,⁸⁶ a degenerationalist, to advance the case against independent invention by savages, who must depend upon “instruction from without” (ibid., 13). This is done to assert the opposite argument: if Whately thinks savages “cannot discover anything”, Best can refute him by instancing “Toltecs and Quichuas” who, although they lived in an isolated jungle fastness, were able to independently reach “an advanced stage of civilisation” (ibid.). Lubbock is also quoted: “The primitive condition of mankind was utter barbarism, from that state certain races have independently raised themselves”⁸⁷ (ibid.). Some primitives managed to rise unaided, others, like the Aitea, did not.

Finally, Best addressed the third factor: environmental determinism. What follows is a theorisation of man in Nature. The Aitea “have never advanced to a higher state” because the “operations of nature herself were against them on every side” (Best, 1892, ibid.). If some human ancestors had shown themselves to be irredeemably primitive, as evidenced by these living survivals, there had to be a reason. He finds this in the power of superabundant tropical nature, swamping the kind of human energy and inventiveness needed to foster civilisation. He has read in Buckle⁸⁸ that

⁸⁵ Presumably Best first began to use this phrase after he read Müller, whose essay “Comparative Mythology” (1856) had appeared in Vol. I of *Selected Essays* in 1881.

⁸⁶ See, Whately, “On the origins of civilisation”, public lecture, 1857 (Whately, 1857).

⁸⁷ See in, Lubbock, John, *Early conditions of mankind*, reference not located.

⁸⁸ Henry Thomas Buckle (1821-1862), a British historian and freethinker. Like Best, he was a lively auto-didact, who conceived an interest in ethnography and the histories of civilisation.

“ancient civilisations sprang up in tropic countries” with plentiful food, but that effective progress was not dependent on nature’s bounty, “but on the energy of man” (ibid.). Providence alone was insufficient, Buckle argued, if those so provided for were constitutionally (i.e. racially) inferior: “In Brazil nature was too powerful and prodigal, and overcame man by exuberance” (ibid.). What follows is an aestheticisation of nature that echoes the Romantic Sublime: the primeval forest overcomes man, its rampant luxuriance dictating a mythology of terror.⁸⁹ Nature, in the Philippines, and other tropical countries prevents the growth of civilisation “encouraged and fostered in other lands” (ibid., 14).

The impassability of the jungle cut off communities from outside contact, so the benefits of diffused ideas and technologies were denied the primitive: “The Indian of the vast Brazilian forests, the Aitea of the Philippine jungles, and *the inhabitants of many similar regions*⁹⁰ were subdued by fear and veneration of the works of nature.” (ibid., italics mine). According to Best, it is suffocating isolation that produces a recognizable and common religious response: “Thus it is that the mythology of every tropical country is based upon terror” (ibid.). Best’s psychological profile of primitive mythopoeia is as much a literary, as an ethnographic observation. It is worthwhile to quote at length here, italicising certain imaginative projections.

To the primitive man a *vague feeling of awe* is suggested by the contemplation of the storm, a *feeling of utter helplessness* by the rampant luxuriance of vast forests, a *feeling of intense loneliness and littleness* by the rush of the mighty rivers and the solitude of the unbroken jungle. He peoples the gloomy forest with strange and malignant beings, and *fears to enter their dark depths*. He sees the work of evil spirits in the flooded river, the roaring cataract, and the

Best appears to have taken much of his thinking from Buckle, who argued that the superior European (read English) intellect, favoured by nature, overcame extremes to advance in civilisation. The savages of the tropics, hedged in by powerful natural forces of extreme prodigality, were subject to the imagination, superstition, and fear. This could well be the origin of Best “mythology of terror” thesis.

⁸⁹ In the collocation of human emotion and sublime objects, Best was writing in a line of English literary aesthetics stretching from Edmund Burke, to Wordsworth and beyond. The Sublime, beyond reason, or language, could also be experienced as a form of Terror. See Boulton, James T (Burke & Boulton, 1987, xv-xx).

⁹⁰ This line of argument will be fundamental in Best’s later discussions of Māori and Nature.

lightening-riven tree, and his imagination, occupied by these fearsome subjects, becomes *warped and debased* (ibid., italics mine).

Best has either derived this analysis from elsewhere, elaborated it from experience, or perhaps a combination of both. Its interest lies not so much in what he tells us about attitudes the Aitea might hold to the supernatural, but in his own. This is not to say he is entirely wrong: rather that his instruments are poetic, and not empirical. Unable to access native informants, he assumes he knows what peoples at such a level of human development think and feel. It seems far more likely that this is Best-as-Romantic: his response to the natural world (or a vision of it) for which he has deep emotional attachments. This enfeebling wilderness is almost a reversal of Blanche Baughan's later New Zealand Romantic vision, the ennobling heights of alpine solitude, "veilless and voiceless before the presence of the primal unspeakable Forces" (Baughan, 1916, 100-101). But it is nevertheless the description of a *psychological*, and not an *actual* wilderness.⁹¹ This is a literary construct, advancing Best's embryonic notions of the psychology of religion: beginning and ending in primitive superstition, prior to the arrival of reason, literacy and scientific explanations for natural phenomena. Best was to become increasingly preoccupied in later writings with the influence of nature on the "primitive mind", or the "barbaric mentality".

This section ends with a discussion on the relationship of civilised man to the forest – which is perhaps what Best is attempting to work out: how could he, and settler society in general, respond to the wilderness, the bush at their doorstep? The warping and debasing effects of the primeval forest (noted above) serve as a warning to those who have risen in civilisation: according to Pickering,⁹² the forest itself is a potential enemy to those (presumably Europeans) who enter it.

⁹¹ See, "Solitude and the Primitive Mind", *Canterbury Times*, October 22 1902, p 53. Best, ten years later, will construct a "Pākeha man of nature" under the pseudonym, "Te Mohoao" (woodsman, barbarian). "To the imaginative mind, as of primitive man, or the thinking man who is enamoured of Nature, the forest contains great possibilities." See Chapter 5.

⁹² Presumably Charles Pickering, from the earlier cited *Races of man* (Pickering & Hall, 1876).

On entering a wooded country, man will naturally lapse into a ruder state, and he must either conquer and destroy the forest or he will himself yield before its influence (ibid., 14).

He also cites Argyle (sic) – who, ironically, is advancing a degenerationist viewpoint – as further testimony to the power of nature to accelerate an innate human tendency towards moral corruption.⁹³

Indisputable facts of history prove that man has always in him the elements of corruption, he is capable of degradation, his knowledge may decay, his religion become lost (Argyle in Best, ibid.).

That Best was quite willing to use a Protestant defender of biblical anthropology may prove little more than that he was unaware of the contradictions in these various positions as he attempted to make his case for the progressivist model. It is also an indicator of the fluid nature of the debate on origins in New Zealand at that time. There was no training for would-be ethnographers: the enterprise was bound up in a culture of intelligent amateurism, where well-read colonial administrators banded together as gentlemen scholars, with an often uncritical acceptance of the works of overseas “authorities”.

It is revealing that Best should end this section on the innate and irreversible savagery of primitive man with warnings on the possible loss of civilised advances should Westerners stay too long in an environment predisposing humanity to moral, cultural and intellectual stagnation. The ability to “visit” prehistory by studying savages comes with a warning: stay there too long and you may begin to revert to their developmental plane.⁹⁴ This is fascinating, in the light of Best’s later, declared love of the wilderness and solitude, and the attributing of his own relationship with nature as key to his ability “to probe the mind of primitive man, to see with his eyes,

⁹³ Argyll, George Douglas Campbell, Duke of (1823-1900). *Primeval man: an examination of some recent speculations*, Strahan (London), 1869. He argued – in a modified form of Whately’s diffusionism – that savage races were civilised remains, fallen in the struggle for existence and driven to the margins, “mere outcasts of the human race”.

⁹⁴ Best seems to fear the power of prodigal nature at this point: three years later he was to begin a fifteen-year sojourn in the Urewera. His relationship to nature and the wilderness often seems ambivalent – this will be examined in Chapter 4.

to think with his mind".⁹⁵ In a *Canterbury Times* article ten years later, Best would present himself as a priestly mediator of Nature and the forest gods - who also warned that over-exposure to the sources of primitivism would reawaken old superstitions: "Get back into the open country for a spell. Destroy the forest, or it will conquer you" (ibid.). It could be argued that this is simply a warning against bush-fever. In the context of the 1892 article, it seems more likely that Best's complex views on nature, the wilderness and developmentalism maintain unconscious links to moralistic universes, and Anglo-European myth structures. These underlie pre-Enlightenment conceptions of the supernatural world: the dark forest where danger and enemies lurk. This ambivalence, combining an atavistic attraction to Māori and the bush (the primitive in the wilderness), along with a fear of being overtaken by the prodigality of nature (the need to retain civilised boundaries), needs closer attention. Did the persona of "ethnographer" enable him to manage the tension? Such a role enabled him to both be with Māori in their disappearing thought world, and yet remain anchored to his European heritage and audience.

His closing thoughts on the Aitea and their religion prefigure what will follow: in explaining the need to study such people, he ends by advancing a case for the study of Māori society, given that they too are the successors of "a bygone [Polynesian] civilisation" (ibid., 18). He closes this section of the study by setting out a view of the human imagination, and its relationship to mythological creativity, locating primitive religion in a setting dominated by natural forces, at the lower levels of human development.

Almost all primitive religions consist of worship paid to Nature and her operations. Mythology is the effort of uncivilised man to explain the mysteries of creation; and if the race advances in civilisation, the mythological cultus is improved. Man, in his primordial state, requires some tangible object to worship, for an abstract idea is beyond his comprehension. His imagination rises to the occasion, and imbues inanimate objects with mysterious powers, and conjures up visions of evil spirits in the primeval forest, the gloomy canyon, or on the lonely mountain peaks (ibid.).

⁹⁵ See, *Canterbury Times*, October 22, 1902. "On Solitude and the Primitive Mind", p53,

If the “lovers of the noble science of anthropology” were able to see that the present successors of such ancient races “are worthy of the deepest study”, they would be rewarded with a virtual prehistoric tour, a glimpse from their civilised maturity, back into the childhood of man. (ibid.) That same science is the result of abstract thought and the ascendancy of reason, the post-Enlightenment liberation of mankind from religious superstition. Those like the Aitea were seen to be responding to the world at an earlier level of human evolutionary thinking. Where science explained and demystified nature, mythology peopled it with fearful imaginary beings. Best was writing at a time when socio-cultural evolutionist thinking was challenging Christian orthodoxy on a broad front; his view that science was able to explain and demystify religion is of a piece with his confidence in rationalising all forms of early, primitive superstitions. The primary factor that separated civilised man from his primitive forebears was the absence of abstract thought in prehistoric peoples. The particular scientific world view, which Best inherited and interprets here, located the early imaginings of humanity as tending to animism in regard to religious matters, and the production of *ür*-myths to explain creation. He assumes the absence of the powers of abstract thought in such prehistoric stages: the later development of such a faculty had enabled rational man to explain the need for religion, and the psychology of mythopoetics.

Best’s reasoning is not always reliable, as his inconsistencies show. In order to support his assertions about the primitive imagination, he again cites Argyll from the degenerationalist camp. A quote from this source seems to contradict this developmental hierarchy: “Imagination is one of the most important faculties of the human mind; without it we could not grasp the Abstract...” (Argyle in Best, *ibid.*). In attempting to prove that imagination is of a lesser (and unrelated) category to abstraction, Best seems unaware that Argyll may be weakening the argument, suggesting that the processes of abstract thinking actually demand the involvement of the imagination. By dividing the human psyche in this way, Best shows the underlying weakness of his thesis: that certain stages of human cultural development equate to child psychology, and the maturing of the adult mind. In his

desire prove the moral inferiority of animistic cultures, he seems not to notice that Argyll's warnings of the imagination's darker aspect are couched in the language of his Protestantism: "...a dangerous faculty, one of the most effective causes of Degradation, the very root of Idolatry, as witness the dependence of the human mind on outward symbols, and the tendency to identify symbols with what they represent" (ibid.).

As further proof of the impermeability of the primitive Aitea psyche, Best notes that when Islam was introduced from Borneo, it met with indifference, as did the Catholic Christianity brought by the Spanish. The reason for this was the lack of any apparatus to absorb the new teaching: "For religious doctrines have little effect on a people unless preceded by intellectual culture" (ibid.). As was the case when the missionaries arrived in New Zealand, there are a number of other plausible explanations as to why an indigenous people may be unwilling to embrace a new religion, packaged in an alien culture. Best is looking to support his view of primitive man, and ends the discussion of the Aitea with the conviction that they, "as a nation, are doomed" (ibid.).

The time during which we may collect information of these old world peoples is fast slipping away. These aborigines, so little known to the world, are well worthy the interest of the ethnologist. Their undoubted antiquity and ancient language, their singular legends and customs of a remote past, their stolid conservatism in the face of their approaching destiny, all combine to render them a particularly interesting race...They have seen have seen their old time foes conquered by the hated *caras blancas*; they see their homes of the dim long ago occupied by an alien people; they recall the ancient freedom of their race, and hear, in the sullen monotone of the distant ocean, their eternal requiem (ibid., 19.).

In the same issue of the *JPS* (118-125, 195-201), Best moves from discussing the indigenous Aitea to a study of the incoming Tagalo-Bisaya peoples who displaced

them, probably from Borneo, or the Malay peninsula.⁹⁶ These studies are titled “Pre-Historic Civilisation in the Philippines: The Tagalo-Bisaya Tribes, I & II”. Best’s purpose is to explore the origins of these Malay peoples, their language and cultural achievements, their displacement of the Aitea aboriginals, and to demonstrate their suitability to be placed on a higher rung of socio-cultural evolution than the savage. There is also a significant discussion of their level of intellectual progress, especially in moral and religious matters, where “They were beginning to renounce the old Nature worship, and to have a more or less confused idea of a superior religion, of which the central figure was a Supreme Maker” (ibid., 201).

The account opens with Best chiding the indifference of the “powerful and highly civilised” Spanish conquerors to the “manners, customs, language, religion, and traditions” of the “strange semi-civilisation” they subjugated, when conquering and forcibly converting to Christianity the Tagalo-Bisaya tribes (ibid., 118). There were some writings preserved, however: clerics and travellers (Legaspi, de Loarca and de Morga) left extensive descriptions from the early seventeenth century. He had just read in a Spanish language publication a paper by the Bishop of Oviedo, “La antigua civilizacion de las Islas Filipinas”.⁹⁷ Working from this source, he goes on to discuss the work of Spanish scholars on the “whence of various Malayan tribes”, Sanskrit survivals in the Tagalo dialect, links from the Philippines to Micronesia and Polynesian migration. These tribes “were thought to be derived from the coasts of Malabar and Malacca” but the Spanish were able to find nothing definite “from their traditions about the original habitat of the race” (ibid., 119). Best explains

...the migration took place at a remote period, and that all knowledge of their former home was lost. When a migratory race takes possession of new regions it maintains little or no correspondence with those left behind; thus in time they

⁹⁶ Recent scholarship contends that the islands were populated initially from Asia by Mongoloid peoples, via a land bridge. The Negritos / Aitea / Aeta arrived by sea around 30,000 years ago, followed by Malay peoples, Chinese traders in the tenth century, Muslims from Borneo in the fourteenth, and Magellan in 1521, to claim the archipelago for Spain. The Philippines passed into United States control after the Spanish-American War (1898), and became a republic in 1946. At the time Best was writing, the colonial culture was Spanish.

⁹⁷ *Revista Ibero-Americana*, (1891), (ibid.).

forget their old habitations, and their geographical knowledge is reduced to obscure and fading traditions (ibid., 120).

As Best was himself a member of a migratory race with very strong connections to old habitations and traditions, one assumes he is speaking of cultures dependent on oral literacy.

The balance of the first part of this article goes into some detail about the manners and customs of this “semi-civilised people” who are by nature, “great children” (ibid., 120-121). There are a number of references to customs analogous to Māori forms: tattooing, food storage in pataka-like structures (the first direct mention of Māori) and the hongi (which attracts a note from the “EDITORS”)⁹⁸ (ibid., 120, 122, 124). There is a comparison of the barangan sailing vessel to “those of the ancients described by Homer” (ibid., 123). Best concludes this cultural survey by noting although these peoples were despised by their Spanish conquerors as “ignorant savages”, yet the padre Legaspi “says in his MS., they were worthy of being placed on a superior level to certain ancient people who possess a more illustrious fame. And who shall say it was not so?” (ibid., 125).

Part II of the article examines birth rituals, language (Sanskrit survivals in Malay), concluding with a discussion on Tagalo-Bisaya religious thought and practice. This is potentially the most valuable section, as Best begins to present his thinking on the development of religious ideas: the transition from “Nature worship...to a dim idea of a Supreme Being - a Maker of all things” (ibid., 197). Apart from the English navigator Cavendish,⁹⁹ who visited the group in 1588 and described in rather horrified terms a people who “wholly worship the Devil”, Best quotes no other authorities as he works out his ideas on human intellectual development in the field of religion (ibid., 198). He gives their traditions on the origin of man, a future life and “primitive notions of original sin...[the] punishments and rewards of a future life” (ibid., 200). Drawing as he does on a Spanish clerical source, this framework for

⁹⁸ The connection to Māori is made only to the specific comparisons mentioned.

⁹⁹ Cavendish, Thomas (1555-1594), English adventurer and privateer, in the mould of Drake.

examining Tagalo-Bisaya religious thought and practice is an orthodox Christian lens: creation, sin and judgment.

In summarising “the state of civilisation among the Tagalo-Bisaya tribes” at the time of Christian and Islamic contact, Best concludes that the “Philippine natives at this time were at a singularly interesting stage of intellectual progress” (ibid., 201). The lessons of “the savage Aitea or the semi-civilised Tagalo-Bisaya”, for the student of anthropology, are to do with “the evolution of the human intellect”, and the “moral and religious condition of uncivilised races” (ibid.). Best’s schema involves the “crude fetishism of savagedom” from which Filipinos were emerging into “the second stage of religious feeling”, where they had “evolved out of the contemplation of Nature, one of those wonderful mythologies which are met with among so many nations” (ibid.). He then makes what may be the earliest reference in his writing to the “high god” thesis, later to manifest in his defence of the Io doctrine:

They were beginning to renounce the old Nature worship, and to have a more or less confused idea of a superior religion, of which the central figure was a Supreme Maker (ibid.).

Taken from Spanish-language sources, this interpretation has to be received at face value; it shows him grading other peoples’ development on the basis of their religious thought. At this point, Best believed that “cultural” development brought religious “refinement” – and vice versa.

The co-evolution of religion and civilisation...[leads to] the gradual refinement of the national religion as the culture of the race improves, and the degradation of that religion when a race retrogrades in civilisation. It is one of the many grand problems, based on the retributive laws of Nature, which confront the enquirer into that great and wonderful mystery – the development of the human race (ibid.).

While there is no clear definition of what is meant by “culture”, nor any reference to sources, this statement bears the hallmarks of both Tylor and Spencer, with a touch of Whateley or any one of a number of degenerationists. Human cultural evolution

proceeds through stages to a civilised peak – from which it may fall, but is nevertheless assumed to be moving upwards, from the simple to the complex. Religious ideas and systems are a part of this cultural movement: men produce gods or a God, according to their level of intellectual progress, and their ability to move from mythic archetypes, to abstract thought. Those prepared to study such peoples as the Aitea and Tagalo-Bisaya will observe “the struggling intellect of primitive man” as he moves in “the dawn of intellectual day”. The key issue for cultural survival in this model is what occurs when the savage and the barbarian, respectively, experience contact with the civilised. Best contends that the Philippines example proves the inability of “rude savages” to adapt: they are diffusion-proof, as he has argued, whereas the more advanced Tagalo were further along the “highway that leads from barbarism to a higher culture”. They were assimilable, “enabled to receive the teachings of his Iberian invaders” (ibid.).

Conclusions:

As George Stocking has observed, “many of ethnology’s methodologies were drawn from traditional forms of inquiry, and its central problem – the unity or diversity of mankind – derived from deep-rooted European ‘anthropological’ concerns” (Stocking, 1987, 48). Was the origin of humankind to be found in a monogenist, biblical model, or did a more racialised polygenist thesis fit the emerging arguments of evolution - and the needs of colonial subjection? In the light of this article on the Philippines, what is the operative framework of Best’s beliefs at this point in his career, shortly before he began his major fieldwork in the Urewera? He takes for granted a simplified Tyloorean cultural evolutionism, in which deterministic laws of Nature and Progress combine to advance some peoples to the highest form of human development (civilisation based on literacy), while consigning others to the lowest (savagery mired in irrational superstition). The intermediate stage of barbarism (semi-literate pastoralism) as it survived in the 19th century was assimilable, but the most primitive level of savagery was doomed to extinction. Savages were not to be despised however, but rather valued and studied for what they could teach civilised peoples about the prehistory of their ancestors: the

“science of savages”, as Stocking has called it (*ibid.*). This use of the comparative method – especially in the realm of religious belief and practice – became one of Best’s prime theoretical tools in analysing the “childhood of the human race.” In his belief that the mythologies of tropical countries were based on terror induced by the fear and veneration of nature, he is introducing a note of personal psychology in the Romantic sublime.¹⁰⁰ This is an important element in his construction of a primitive stasis; yet he also makes clear Nature worship can evolve into monotheism when “barbaric” tribes progress far enough intellectually to conceive of a supreme being. His concept of the development of religion and civilisation proceeding hand-in-hand is clear when he warns that progressivism has limits: if a race goes backwards in civilisation, religion will regress also. To this extent at least, he also encompasses the degenerationalist position.

Best at this point of his life is something of a magpie: not an original thinker, but certainly a pioneer auto-didact of the frontier school.¹⁰¹ He is capable of intensive and thorough examination of sources on the level of material culture – but tends to gather opinions that reflect his commonplace ethnographical mindset. Because he was not able to view the progress of his field through critical study – anthropology itself being a very new discipline, lacking in training for its colonial practitioners – he presents as an enthusiastic and intelligent collector, looking for intellectual structures in which to insert his findings. He had obviously read widely in the developing field, and was aware of both primary sources - such as travellers, explorers, missionaries - and also the principal theorists. Perhaps the most seminal comment in the piece is the following:

These primitive people are an interesting study on account of their long isolation in a remote group, and it will be interesting to compare them with the southern

¹⁰⁰ In a typical Romantic formulation, the individual is elevated, and has their uniqueness enhanced by transcendent experiences of Nature’s power and beauty; in Best we have primitive man stunted and paralysed by a malevolent and claustrophobic jungle.

¹⁰¹ “Standing outside the normal processes by which intellectual traditions are transmitted, the autodidact may embody the spirit of his age in an unusually direct way. For the same reason, his relation to the past is apt to be distorted: his intellectual roots descend haphazardly, putting down feelers here and there as they happen to find nourishment” (Stocking, 1987, 112).

branches of the race. Much valuable information on this subject may yet be obtained by our members. Good work has been done by the pioneers of Polynesian ethnology, but much more remains to be accomplished. We are yet merely working the surface of this great field, and may well take for our motto the words of the great German – “More light”¹⁰² (Best, 1892, 8).

Best saw himself, the founders of the Society (and no doubt earlier writers such as Grey and White) as pioneers in Polynesian ethnology, presented in New Zealand with a primitive cultural survivor group, Māori, who were especially worthy of serious study, in part because of long isolation from their Indo-European roots. The excitement at the great work lying before him is palpable: citing the Promethean Goethe’s last words also adds to the sense of a mission conferred. The aim of the next chapter will be to examine what happened when Best went on to apply his ideas in the field, once he was appointed in 1895 as quartermaster and unofficial ethnographer in the Urewera.

¹⁰² The last words of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, (1749 – 1832). Goethe has a chapter devoted to him in Emerson’s *Representative men*: it would be interesting to discover if Best had read of him in this transcendentalist rollcall of intellectual super heroes (Emerson, 1886).

Chapter 3. Tuhoe into print: Best's writing life in the Urewera, 1895-1910.

Introduction.

Methodology.

Letters, 1895-1908.

"Tuhoe", Vol I, Pt II:iii.

Articles in the *Journal of the Polynesian Society* (JPS), 1897-1907.

Newspaper articles (*The Press, Canterbury Times*).

Introduction:

This chapter examines some of the literary outcomes of the foundational intellectual influences reviewed in the previous chapter on Best's major period of fieldwork. It analyses a cross section of his writings either written and published during the Urewera years, or - in the case of his best known work, *Tuhoe* - published later. This "magnum opus" was completed during these years (1907), but not published until 1925. Sections of this book will be examined here and in Chapter 5, which will concentrate on works completed in his years in the Dominion Museum (1911-1931). The latter part of this present period coincides with the development of Percy Smith's *Io* thesis and Best's gradual conversion to the high god concept, which flowered in the period of his museum tenure. Considered here, it points to the earliest written appearance of his thoughts on the issue of Māori monotheism.

Best's fifteen-year sojourn amongst Tuhoe greatly expanded his firsthand experience, as well as confirming many of his existing positions on the nature of primitive society. This chapter tests the hypothesis that his views of the informants' material were deeply affected by a romantic, backward-looking vision of an essentialised Māori psychology that had existed in a pre-contact pristinity. His early writings from this period are examined closely: his letters to Percy Smith, 1895-1908; sections of *"Tuhoe"* (Vol I, Pt II:iii.); articles in the *Journal of the Polynesian Society* (JPS), 1897-1907; and various newspaper

articles (*The Press*, *Canterbury Times*). The genres studied will include letters, newspaper and journal articles: Best's development as an ethnographer will be considered, and the application of his ideas to Tuhoe. This will include writings from *JPS* articles, e.g. "Te-Rehu-o-Tainui: the evolution of a Māori atua" (*JPS*, Vol VI: 22, June 1987), and other contributions to the Journal. There will be a selection of newspaper articles from *The Canterbury Times* (1897-1906) and the *Christchurch Press* (Jan-March 1987). Best's letters to Smith from the Urewera will be a prime focus.

The chapter analyses five major issues recurring in these genre over the period 1895-1910: identity and belonging, Māori authenticity, esoterica and the Io concept, primitive survivals and Māori agency. This involves some speculation on Best's need for Māori in order to locate his own identity, and the metaphysical nature of his quest for the "kura huna", or hidden knowledge. It will be argued that positing such a pristine Māori nature, located in a vanished past, exoticised Māori at a frozen level of culture and contributed to their disempowerment in the present. This gave Pākehā like Best forms of ownership in the production of Māori textual identities in the twentieth century. At the same time, a balance needs to be struck in view of the fact that his work preserved a unique archive and body of published material, and that without his tenacious efforts over a lifetime, the vast body of references that stem from his oeuvre today could not exist. Best did not get it all right - but he did write it all.

Much of this study of Best's Urewera writings concerns the question of agency: was the power all in Pākehā hands, simply because they controlled the means of production? Or was this collection of traditional and historical oral material a shared enterprise, where Māori through their own literary outlets maintained levels of agency and self-definition? In Best we have an example of Pākehā using Māori cultural materials to define and locate Māori *being*. Yet behind this extensively documented strategy, we see glimpses of Māori using Pākehā cultural forms to do the same. Best and Smith used whakapapa to locate Māori in the sweep of a secular Western chronology, and

a mystic past. Tutakangahau and the prophet Rua Kenana used the biblical traditions of genealogy and prophecy to align that past with a literate, Christian modernity, and resist the illegitimacies of settler power.

The discovery and the elaboration of an esoteric high god cult (Io) seeded a mystical culture for the future. The denial of Christian influences flew in the face of syncretistic developments Best had witnessed amongst Tuhoe (such as Te Kooti's karakia, better known today as Ringatu services); this displays his inability to hold nuanced views of the Māori situation. The socio-evolutionist analysis that interpreted Māori culture as a "primitive survival" exoticised the Māori psyche through a crude essentialism. Tuhoe engagement with the present – their active agency – was denied, or minimised. While Best was seeking the pristine Māori, Tutakangahau, his principal informant was also engaged with other Māori in enlarging their spiritual universe, to unify whakapapa in line with biblical models. The hereditary power of the chief - mana - had diminished, and traditional leaders were becoming as obsolete as the great waka taua (war canoes) now beached and rotting, or destined for museums. Whakapapa became the new currency, both for Pākehā like Best to establish historical origins and migration dating, and for leaders like Tutakangahau to make links with a biblical universe and a European chronology.¹⁰³ Rua Kenana - written off by Best as a false messiah - was a new breed of prophet altogether, neither hereditary leader nor averse to modernity's attractions. His lack of fit in any of the Bestian models of authentic Māori being as much as his charismatic excesses, earned the ethnographer's enmity.

Methodology:

The main issues - identity and belonging, Māori authenticity, esoterica and the Io concept, primitive survivals and Māori agency - are examined here in

¹⁰³ I am indebted to unpublished material from Lyndsay Head (2005-6) for these observations on chiefly mana and whakapapa.

their appearances throughout the various genres. While this may give rise to some overlap, it is generally true that they contain different subject matter - for instance, the letters concentrate on whakapapa, and were mostly written early in his time there. The first signs of worked-up Io material are found in *Tuhoe*, which dates from around 1905-1907, at the end of Best's tenure in the region. Where there are links from one genre to another, this will be signalled. This gives a predominantly chronological slant to the study, revealing Best's developing concerns over his time in the field. While the chapter primarily traces how Best worked and why, as a by-product it sheds light on his development as a writer: from early academic articles, to popular journalism hived off to enhance his income, culminating in the authorship of a significant literary work. The chapter then is organised primarily according to genre, and the way these contain his developing thought on Māori anthropology.

Letters 1895-1908:

Early:

These letters to Percy Smith provide rich insight into Best's motives and methods, as he began - uniquely in New Zealand history - to practise as a Māori speaking ethnologist in the field.¹⁰⁴ He sought the "kura huna", as he collected whakapapa from informants who filled paipera (literally, bibles - usually exercise books) with the genealogies he coveted. Best was acting as Smith's eyes and ears, helping to construct a chronology of origins in an attempt to date early voyages. This explains why he complains of "short whakapapa" as he began his relationship with the man who would become his principal informant - Tutakangahau of Maungapohatu. Best believed he had the capacity to "think as a savage" and saw himself as a recorder and preserver of vanishing knowledge held by "primitive survivals" - thus advancing the fledgling science of anthropology. While he was collecting whakapapa, he was also preparing copious notes for his "M.O." [magnum

¹⁰⁴ All letters in this section - unless otherwise specified - were viewed in the manuscripts section of the Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, under the designation ATL, followed by their reference number.

opus] - the book that would become the tribal history, *Tuhoe*. The letters reveal his increasing disenchantment with histories of tribal wars, and the development of what became a lifelong fascination with Māori religion, spirituality and the esoteric. At the same moment, his ageing informant was calling whakapapa hui, but for quite different purposes: Tutakangahau was trying to align the genealogies of Rangi and Papa with a biblical world view. Best was moving Māori being back into the past as Māori leaders, their mana (power) dissipated and tapu (sacred awe) made void, were elevating the primal parents towards a Christianised heavenly realm.

Best's letters to Smith, 1895-1896, (ATL, MS-0072-08) and Smith's replies, are an important early source for understanding the concerns and activities of both men. They contain many whakapapa lists, and comments on informants, especially Tutakangahau, e.g. "he is a mine of kura (knowledge) and very ngawari (obliging)..." (letter, undated, c.1895?). It will be important to trace the various ways Best uses significant words like "kura",¹⁰⁵ "paipera" and "whakapapa", e.g. "I find that patai (questions) re w. (shorthand symbol for whakapapa) lead to the most lovely disclosures" (letter to Smith, 20.2.96). In the same letter we have, "Tutaka has written me some grand w. [whakapapa]. He is a fine old chap to get along with...Taihoa, for verily I do believe the kura to be within my grasp". The collecting impulse was certainly curatorial, and while Best saw himself as preserving for posterity what Māori could not – or would not – record, he could also behave as its owner.

Elsdon Craig filleted Best's early letters for drafts of his 1964 biography, including material from Best's notebooks, and Polynesian Society correspondence with Percy Smith (ATL, MS-7888-063). This includes a piece on "Translation of Maori Matter" from Notebook 15, (259), ATL; and a fascinating request to Smith to have copies of Journal articles reprinted. His

¹⁰⁵ Craig, in an address delivered in 1966, uses kura in what seems a direct quote from Best (unsourced): "The true 'kura (treasures) of life'" (Craig, 1966, 94). This gives the sense of something valuable, precious, to be treasured.

native friends whom I correspond with are very glad to get them, but you know what Maoris are, they will not subscribe. However, some of them take a deal of pain in obtaining and writing out information for me and therefore I like to send them something in return (Polynesian Society correspondence, letter undated).

Tutakangahau was obviously one of these, and comments on an earlier article (1894) in an 1898 issue of the Journal.¹⁰⁶ Best also used copies of Journal articles sent to him by Smith “as a means of introduction”; he encouraged his mentor to give him “any patai for the above tribes” (Letter to Smith, 5.2.95. See MS-Papers-0788-024, Elsdon Craig papers, (67) ATL.) There was much Māori interest in what the Society was publishing; see the note on whakapapa from Paetini, 22.5.95: “Paetini of Urewera gave me the w. from Toi to Paewhiti. These men are very good and will give us all they know. They have a great admiration for our work but condemn some of Tarakawa’s statements.” A number of these letters will be examined in detail. This note of admiration for Māori accomplishments with regard to whakapapa is clearly expressed later by Best, when he writes in *Tuhoe* (1907), “Maori are usually the most accomplished and conservative genealogists” (Best, 1925, 19).

Best’s mission to acquire whakapapa is a constant subject in these early letters. Writing to Smith in 1895 (letter dated 6.7.95, MS-Papers-0072-08) he passes on whakapapa given by Tutakangahau and notes: “These whakapapas [written in shorthand] of these people are very good and if followed up will lead to quite a long historical a/c ... I think I can get the best a/c obtainable from *the most primitive people of the Maori race in N.Z.* [mine]” (3). By “primitive” Best means both neolithic (he uses the terms interchangeably) and pristine: those Māori closest to their pre-European state, and therefore the best local examples of a pre-existent human cultural plane. In writing of his informant’s willingness to engage in his “whakapapa-ing”, he gives a picture

¹⁰⁶ See Article in JPS, Vol III, 1894, pp59-71, and Tutakangahau’s comments on this article in a later Journal, Vol VII, no 25, 1898, 32-34. Tutakangahau, referred to by Best as “my learned friend and Ruanuku” had handed him some notes concerning the arrival of the Mata-atua canoe from Hawaiki, where he confirms “part of what [Tarakawa] says, but differ(s) with him in some parts”.

of a readiness to cooperate soon after his arrival. A Māori-speaking Pākehā anxious to collect whakapapa would have been a novelty in the Urewera, where few Europeans ventured, let alone set up camp. “Harawai of Te Whaiti has a book nearly ready for me and I have many promises from N. Whare re the *kura*. This *kura* I believe is at Te Whaiti and we will yet acquire it” (Letter to Smith, 18.8.95, 69). At Whirinaki at the same time, he writes “I really have done no whakapapa-ing for the past three weeks. (Yet the faculty are working for me) and I receive messages from Te Whaiti writing of the treasures that await me” (Letter to Smith, 14.8.95). This is a reference to his many informants.

In letters written over the same year, Best refers to the shorthand system he had developed to keep up with his informants’ oral delivery. “Tutaka has more matter concerning the Maruiwi and I will have it yet. I have just sent him another paipera to work upon.¹⁰⁷ Many thanks for the [shorthand symbols] book. I have merely glanced at it. I think however we will keep our own system”. (n/d, 1895-96, 3) In another letter the issue of whakapapa length is again discussed, and the matter of primitive psychology: “I should like to know of the origin of the Taranaki Ngapotiki. You will see that Tutaka gives 23 gens. from Oho. I have the golden *kura* from Tutaka just in...”. Best almost certainly means a kind of hidden knowledge, as becomes apparent later.¹⁰⁸ “Verily here are some grand kaumatua, I never tire of them. Men whose minds were old a thousand years ago but are a thousand behind now” (n/d, 1895-96).

¹⁰⁷ Best gave his informants notebooks (paipera) to fill with whakapapa. He later refers to a “Bible” that Tutakangahau gives him, containing information, and “some good matter therein” (Letter, 19.2.96). The word “paipera” was coined for the Holy Bible around 1830, but by 1860, the meaning had moved to include legal documents (see Duval). Best may be investing the whakapapa books with a pseudo-biblical status, or taking across a local usage from Tuhoe, i.e. important books, or those in which tapu matters are inscribed, become “paipera” (Duval, 1995, 282).

¹⁰⁸ See *Waikaremoana*: “For the glamour of the wilderness is upon him, and the *kura huna* – the ‘concealed treasure’ (of knowledge) – loometh large in the land of Tuhoe” (Best, 1897 (1975), 9).

This latter statement exemplifies the belief in “primitive survivals”: that Māori and specifically, Tuhoe, possessed an essentially unchanged psychology from the dawn of human time. The hyperbolic use of millennia as a measuring rod is not meant to be chronologically accurate: it is a metaphor opposing human primitivism to human progress. Māori, ancient a thousand years ago, have not changed, but the European settlers have. This stasis implies access can be had, through these “grand kaumatua” to the roots of human psychology, but Māori themselves are unable to access the new – and remain at the same time authentic. What Best welcomes here is the opportunity to study this pristine primitive nature – before it passes away with its bearers.¹⁰⁹

Tutakangahau in Best’s view is such a survivor and he discusses the old man in a letter to Smith (14.9.96): “Old Tutakangahau is down from Maungapohatu and stayed a day with me. He was talking Galatea Roads most of the time but I had an hour or so on other matters with him.” This hints at the fact that Tutakangahau was more concerned with the present reality of roading through the Urewera, than recording the mystic past. He also knew what Best wanted: “He is very good on w.s. and says he has commenced a book for me but that I must go to Maungapohatu and see him when he will give me the sacred (shorthand symbol, kura?)”. He also writes of Hamiora Pio and his books, with their impenetrable karakia: “I have 5 books written by him, all full. If I can manage to copy some I will send originals down but I am afraid I cannot manage it. Parts of them are very obscure to me”. The next paragraph is crucial to understanding Best’s attitude to the colonial moment he and Smith inhabited:

You are right - we who are at such a great disadvantage in 1895 are in reality ahead of those who lived in the days when the tohunga was plentiful. I will back a man with a love for these things [e.g. himself] and not knowing 10 words of Maori, against the linguist who flourished in the 40s - with a few exceptions.

¹⁰⁹ These issues will be discussed more fully in Chapter 6: “Old Tu” – historicizing Tutakangahau from the public record.

This may be a statement of a perceived power differential, and the men of the 1890s having the advantage of an emergent, secular ethnography. Fifty years on from the world of the 1840s, and a greater distance in time from the lost world they were seeking to excavate, Best was part of huge shift in settler power. The breakdown of the old structures of social cohesion (tapu, utu, muru, the mana of chiefs) had made Māori elders more vulnerable, and thus more willing, to pass on some of their knowledge. There was a new level of engagement with literacy, and Maori were by then used to operating in the medium of print. The *realpolitik* of the 1890s saw Māori militarily outpointed, whereas in 1840, “when the tohunga was plentiful”, the balance was still in their favour. Best seems to imply that an enthusiastic collector is better off in 1890 than a competent speaker in 1840. It was not simply that the tohunga of the 1840s would not give the Pākehā collectors information; rather that Māori were still fundamentally in charge.

Whether this is historically accurate on all counts is not necessarily the point. It demonstrates a political awareness, often hidden in the language of extinctionism, and the triumph of inevitable progress. With a “faculty” of kaumatua filling whakapapa books throughout the Urewera villages, Best enjoyed a measure of control. He had the opportunity to construct a Māori history and identity that would pass out of Tuhoe’s hands and return as a chapter in the European history of New Zealand. Best is beginning to emerge as the “white tohunga of Tuhoe-land”,¹¹⁰ and Māori history is metamorphosing into anthropology. “Heoi,” (thus) he continues, “the kura steadily accumulates. I shift camp to Te Whaiti next week and shall be nearer the kura huna...there are many pas there and much to be collected. Enough” (14.9.95).

That Smith used Best’s access to Tuhoe to gather information on a range of topics is also clear, from the lists of questions he sent and Best’s responses. A

¹¹⁰ James Cowan uses this expression to describe Best but I have not been able to locate the reference.

list from around this time (undated, from folder ATL, MS-0072-08) defines a range of words, which when received by Smith have been ticked off.

Tutakangahau was one of these sources: “What with the native meeting here and one thing and another I have not really had time to see Tutaka to get a good description of these things. I had a talk of about half an hour with him today and the above is what was clear to me”.¹¹¹ The importance of the writing tasks of these Tuhoe elders is also emphasised, and the dependence of Best and Smith upon their co-operation and literary productions: “I regret to say [Tutakangahau] returns to Maungapohatu tomorrow & I have not had time to have a long talk with him. He is a mine of kura and very ngawari. However, he promises to continue writing. He knows a lot about the [shorthand] that I have not got yet”. Best also mentions one “Parakiri who gave me Pio’s books”. He has “a Paipera written but not finished as he is taking it to kaumatua of diff. tribes to compare and correct”. Their cross-referenced material was then copied by Best, and sent on to Smith, either for his own researches, or for safekeeping: “I will send you a copy of the matter by degrees and keep the original for my own use. You may send me all the patais you can and I will get matter as soon as I can and forward”¹¹² (Letter to Smith, 23.6.1895).

Along with this network of willing contributors, Best saw his other unique advantage in the following terms (reply to a letter from Smith, 19.2.96): “As for your remarks on my own articles, E hoa! ehara i a au. (Friend, it’s not me/my doing) But I possess the faculty of thinking as a savage! I can put myself in his place and think as he does. That is it as far as I can explain”. Best certainly had a unique capacity for empathy with Māori in the context of the times, and an innate ability to acquire other languages. In hindsight, the claim that he was able to put himself in Tutakangahau’s place, while at the same time regarding him as a savage, appears now as an act of transference and

¹¹¹ Item 19 on Smith’s list was a question about an atua in the form of a stick, thrown across the path of an approaching taua – “he karakia, he whiu mo te ope”.

¹¹² Letter to Smith from Whirinaki, 23.6.1895, concerning five books written by Parakiri, written prior to Best’s arrival in the Urewera: “they are full of ancient history”.

identification. Part of Best saw himself as a man of nature and the wilds, a civilised exterior, but with an inward atavism.¹¹³ There was something about men like Tutakangahau that Best seems to have coveted. This ability, however, did not lead him to “take the blanket”, or live with them as if he were Māori. He maintained a cultural distance, however closely he identified with Tuhoe - Best was never a Pākehā-Māori. He remained deeply involved with “civilisation & its attendant libraries”, while gathering information on the vanishing frontier.

Best’s role as Smith’s eyes and ears amongst Tuhoe (and by extension, the Polynesian Society’s) is clearly articulated in his descriptions of the relationship to Tutakangahau. While on one level, this developed into a warm friendship, the old man’s primary role was to supply Best with raw material for his own work and Smith’s: “Old Tutaka is in from Maungapohatu and *has given me a Bible* [my italics] with some good matter therein. But more of this anon as the mail is about to leave”¹¹⁴ (Letter, 19.2.96). In a letter to Smith written the following day, Best describes Tutakangahau’s visit, and the receipt of “a lot of Maui matter”. He goes on to say that he will follow up Smith’s queries with the old man before he returns. Tutakangahau has told him that “Ngapotiki were the [shorthand, ‘tangata whenua’?] of Tuhoe Land...they held from Ruatoki to Ruatahuna etc. I have got from him a lovely w. of Ngapotiki”. Whakapapa were the key for Best; he finds that “patais re w. lead to the most lovely disclosures” and “Tutaka has written me some grand w. He is a fine old chap to get along with – far superior to N. Whare. Taihoa, for verily I do believe the kura to be within my grasp” (Letter to Smith, 20.2.96, MS-0072-08).

¹¹³ See following Chapter, *CT* article on “Solitude and the Primitive Mind”, where Best adopts the pseudonym, “Te Mohoao”: one wild and uncouth, a woodsman, a barbarian (Williams, 1997 (1844, 1917), 206).

¹¹⁴ The use of “Bible” here most likely refers to the “paipera” (whakapapa books) mentioned in the earlier letters - and not a copy of the scriptures.

In the same letter, he characterises “N. Whare and N. Manawa as duffers – they know nothing. Tutaka says they never had a whare-takiura”.¹¹⁵ It is these secret places that Best wants to penetrate, and Tutakangahau is to be his guide: “Item-when Galatea Roads are of the pathetic past I shall disappear from the world of light¹¹⁶ for 1 calendar month and camp with old Tutaka. Kati”. For all that Best wanted to put the road works behind him and time travel backwards with Tutakangahau, the old man was just as determined be involved with the roading project, the money economy, politics and modernity: “Te Tuhi has just arrived here from Maungapohatu with letters from Tutakangahau concerning the Road. Some Tuhoe want to work on it.” (letter, undated, MS-0072-08). Not only was there a willingness among some Tuhoe to get the work, but even to advise on the route: “The old warrior sends me a letter stating the best way to take the Road - wh. I have sent to Mr Turner at Rau-tauhiri”.

At the same time, Smith was also pressuring Best to publish “something from these people” (Letter, 26.3.96): after all, this was the prime reason he had engineered his appointment on the road. But Best was resisting: he saw himself still in collection mode. “Behold the [whakapapa symbol]. My w. work and also entering same in paipera is done at all kinds of odd times and in various scrappy ways.” Best was concerned about his work being lost, and the lack of time, with so much to be done. “The well will not run dry until the [shorthand] are no more.” Best argued that he was not in a position to publish what he had gathered on Tuhoe thus far, and merely printed “these fragments to preserve them”. He was publishing articles on Tuhoe in the *Hot Lakes Chronicle* and the *Otago Witness*, and Smith wanted him to produce a longer series of works for the Journal of the Polynesian Society. To Best, the moment was one for collection: collation and publication would have to wait.

¹¹⁵ See Williams Dictionary (7th ed), p373: 3.a, “In the expression **whare takiura**, building set apart for instruction in esoteric lore. *Ko Kahuponia te whare takiura o Tutakangahau*” [italics mine] (Williams, 1997 (1844, 1917).). See Chapter 6.

¹¹⁶ Head comments, “he wants to go into his other world. He’s found another way to be”, which she believes explains the ‘headiness’ of his tone. Private communication, 6.5.2004.

Best had more pressing concerns: he writes of a “long battle with Tutaka about the shortness of his w. especially the Ngapotiki one which com. at Tuhouhi. He stuck to it however and said some lines are much shorter than others”. While there is no clear indication as to why short whakapapa were a problem, this incident shows that he wanted more from his informants than what was presented, i.e., he wanted to know something about Ngapotiki which Tutakangahau wasn’t giving him, and may not even have existed: “Anyhow, such stories as Te Iho-o-Kataka & origin of Ngapotiki are singularly interesting [shorthand]”. “Such stories as the above three,” Best writes to Smith, “should be studied and written up by an Oriental scholar. Such is my thought”. He implies that he is not that person, but a collector, under urgency, who after leaving the field will be able “to revel in my collection and obtain much pleasure therefrom even though I can no longer scale Maungapohatu or descend the Great Chasm of Toi” (Letter, *ibid.*).

It is clear from these early letters that Best was feeling his way; there is the excitement of a man on the brink of great discoveries, yet frustrated by the lack of time he has to devote to this calling. He is negotiating a path between Smith’s flow of “patais”, his informants’ availability, and their production of whakapapa, his own pleasure in the experience of collecting, pursuing his “kura huna” – as well as the paid employment he has as quartermaster for the roading project. They provide a vivid picture of him as a working ethnographer, living on site amongst Tuhoe, the closest the country had yet come to producing a figure resembling a modern anthropologist.¹¹⁷ Yet his position was ambivalent to the degree that he was still a government employee involved in the politics and economics of road-building. The tension between collecting and recording the secrets of a vanishing world before it disappeared altogether under the very wheels of progress he was oiling was what energised Best in his sojourn amongst Tuhoe – and gives life to this correspondence.

¹¹⁷ Not counting the missionaries, who wrote their own ethnographies of Māori, sharing the same kind of mission station environment – the cultural beachhead - Best was to create around him activities.

Later letters :

Ten years on, the tone and content were changing: Best had collected huge amounts of information in his notebooks, which required indexing (“may the gods assist me”). With an eye to the future, he had “gone through the whole of the Polynesian Journals and 32 vols of Transactions NZ Inst to make an index of references” (Letter to Smith, 7.10.05, (237), MS-Papers-7888-024, ATL). He also makes particular mention of indexing genealogies, “about 500pp”, and of Tutakangahau’s efforts to collate this material on his side. The language and the experience of the two men is revealing: “my aim is to spend most time in writing up matter regarding ancient rites”. In the same letter, he writes of “Old Tutaka...at Ruatoki last night. He had a dream that he had been emasculated and came to the conclusion that it was a warning for him to whakatika (correct, make right) the genealogies etc of Matatua” (ibid.). While it is impossible to know exactly what the dream meant for Tutakangahau, the threat of emasculation, interpreted as a sign he needed to correct the collected whakapapa spurred his return to those elders he had been involved with in this work, “to get the old people to meet and assist him”. There is a context to this which Best’s letter does not show: not only had Tutakangahau been gathering whakapapa, but Tuhoe and other iwi were meeting to do this for their own purposes. A brief digression, touching on the important changing role of whakapapa to Māori is called for here, not least for the contrast it gives to the motives of Best and Smith.

In a letter to *Te Puke ki Hikurangi* of April 10th, 1905 - near the same time as Best’s later letters to Smith - Tutakangahau writes of reading about a whakapapa hui in an earlier issue.¹¹⁸ He encourages those involved, “Niniwa raua ko Whatakorari” (Niniwa and Whatakorari) for their involvement, especially congratulating Whatakorari on his explanations concerning their

¹¹⁸ A well-known Māori language newspaper, published from 1897 until 1913. The title refers to one of the Paikea stories involving a tidal wave (puke=flood), and the newspaper’s master sported a beached ark on the sacred mountain, Hikurangi – another rich layer of connotation for the literate Māori reader, linking their stories with those of scripture.

tipuna, “kai te mihi iho au ki a au korero katoa, e whakamarama nei koe”. (I acknowledge all the accounts explained by you) (4). He goes on to explain that he, Numia Kereru and two others were invited by Best to his home at Ruatoki in January 1905, to question them about the ancestors: “Ka korero a Peehi, ara, ka patai kia¹¹⁹ ahau, ki nga tipuna me nga mana tuku iho i nga tipuna, tae noa mai ki tenei ra”. (Best spoke [to us], questioning me [concerning] the ancestors and the authority descending from them until this time).

Acknowledging Best’s great expertise, “he nui nga whakamarama a taua Pakeha kia matau” (that European possesses great knowledge of us [Tuhoe, Māori]), Tutakangahau is in some measure aligning himself with the mission of Smith and Best: using Māori materials to support their ideological structures concerning human origins, history, comparative mythology and religion. “No reira au i mohio ai, he hui whai tikanga rawa, kaati ena kupu”, he writes – (So in my opinion, an excellent meeting for searching out custom, and that’s the end of it). This is both authoritative, and a pointer to the caution against the misuse of whakapapa that comes next.¹²⁰ “E Hine, e pa,” he counsels, “otira koutou katoa, kaua hei paahitia nga whakapapa i heke mai i o tatau tipuna i puta ai ki te ao marama” (Woman, Sir, all of you, do not ignore the genealogies which come down to us from our ancestors and come forth into the world of light¹²¹). The strength of this prohibition rests on the prohibition, “paahitia”: do not pass over, neglect, or forget the genealogies, (nor use them as mere instruments of individual entitlement in the Native Land Court). It is most likely that Niniwa is a Christian who is making Rangi and Papa into a spiritual universe to parallel the Bible. The hui is trying to get whakapapa to match the biblical genealogies. This is borne out by what follows.

¹¹⁹ “Ki ahau” written as “kia ahau” (to me).

¹²⁰ Many hui to discuss whakapapa were widely held at this time, and much debated in the pages of *Te Puke ki Hikurangi* (see www.nzdl.org/cgi-bin/niupepalibrary/). Some of this was to do with establishing title in Native Land Court claims.

¹²¹ “te ao marama” - either the modern or the Christian worlds.

“Kaore he tikanga o te wehenga ki ia iwi, ki ia iwi” – ([this] is not the reason (or purpose) for the separation/division into tribes), because of the primal unity seen in the originating ancestors, Rangi and Papatuanuku, from whom are all things: “ina hoki kotahi tonu to tatau tipuna, ko Rangi anake raua ko Papatuanuku.” Tutakangahau goes on to give a biblically derived list of what springs from them, everything in this world, life and death, “te mana hoki i to tatau tipuna” – elevating the primal parents, and whakapapa itself, into the sacred regions of the biblical creation account. This view he has backed by Best’s authority cited earlier: it is a product of both Christian influence and Best’s attempt to find in whakapapa a secret key to the mysteries of Māori origins and identity, the mysterious “kura huna”.¹²² Underlying this kōrero is the Old Testament influence on conceptions of whakapapa, the idea of the unity of the one true God, and here perhaps also the foreshadowing of Io as the Supreme Being.

The old man concludes by saying he is calling another hui, “ka karangatia ano e au he hui,” to unify the ancestral genealogies, “hei whakakotahi i nga whakapapa o tatau tipuna”. What this important text demonstrates is how deeply entwined informant and ethnographer were, citing each other as authorities for their own purposes. It also calls into question the supposed pristine nature of information available to Best at a time when whakapapa had evolved to meet a political purpose in the new world. It shows how the intellectual metamorphosis of informants like Tutakangahau had altered their view of the past as they came to terms with the political realities of a disempowered present. We have a view of Best from his chief informant, outside of the Pākehā’s writings. As much as Best and Smith were collecting and analysing the meanings of whakapapa for their own purposes, Tutakangahau and numerous other Māori leaders were engaged in writing their versions, especially through the columns of *Te Puke ki Hikurangi* and other Maori-language newspapers.

¹²² Craig notes that Tutakangahau, “a learned man...was taught to read and write by the missionaries when he was a child” (Craig, 1957, 9). See Chapter 7.

The relationship of Tutakangahau and Best is traced through the letters of the ethnographer until the old man's death in 1908. While there is little detail here at this time, it is clear that a gap had opened up between them in Tutakangahau's last years, which coincided with the rise of the prophet Rua Kenana, to whom he was related. In a letter to Smith early in 1908, Best laments Tutakangahau's decline:

Old Tu of Maungapohatu is fast losing his memory and has also embraced the cult of the "New Messiah". Fortunately I got a good deal of matter during the first few years I was here and can employ myself now at working it up (Letter to Smith, 2.1.08, MS-Papers-7888-024).

Best was losing his favoured source and friend, as the old man's ability, and perhaps his willingness to recall the past declined with his deteriorating health. He was also losing influence, seen in the comment about Tutakangahau's involvement with Rua. Best's antipathy to the prophet has been touched on, and will receive more attention later.¹²³ But despite his acknowledged friendship, the real motivation remains the information Best and Smith were seeking, the "good deal of matter" which could now be worked on.

Four months later, this theme recurs in a letter informing Smith that the old man and other good informants were now dead. There is little concession in a letter like to any personal sadness, but we can imagine what the loss of Tutakangahau must have meant to a man like Best. What was passing with such a man was the frontier society both belonged to, and with it access to that "kura" Best pursued.

I have now not a single mohio left to consult amongst Tuhoe. Tutaka, Te Piria, Tamarau, Pirihi – all have crossed the divide and I am now tutorless. All I can do now is to work up my notes for but little information is now obtainable (Letter to Smith, 20.4.08, *ibid.*).

¹²³ "I have been hunting the New Messiah who is to expel all Europeans from N.Z. He makes me very tired and I have come to the conclusion that Messiahs is pisen (Poison)". Letter to Smith, Ruatoki, 11.6.06.

Again, in a November letter, Best complains that he will now be able to get little information for a projected article on star lore: "I want old Tu back and Tus are *non est* in Tuhoeland now. E taea hoki te aha" (What can be done about it) (Letter to Smith, 13.11.08, *ibid.*). His loneliness does show through here, couched in characteristic stoicism - the problem brought back to the lack of informants. The death of Tutakangahau and the loss of his generation of Tuhoe elders was the spur to Best's final departure from the Urewera in March 1910. He had collected a huge amount of material, and needed time and space to write it up. The letters speak of this, in his frequent comments on the genesis and editing of what became *Tuhoe: The Children of the Mist*, completed in mid-1907.

Whereas the early letters are full of references to whakapapa, and kura huna, those of the last five years show Best increasingly concerned about how to approach the writing of his projected Tuhoe history. Smith had pursued him for some time on the fate of this material, referred to by Best as "M.O.", or "magnum opus". In 1905 he writes "My idea of the M O is to make it a sort of compendium of Tuhoean ethnography, manners, customs, myths, religion, folk lore etc etc, but not including the tribal wars which are absolutely void of interest to the genuine anthropologist" (Letter to Smith, 8.8.05, *ibid.*). He had hoped to keep the history separate for articles in the *Journal*, but could not see how the "M O can appear in [the] journal". Best is signalling a division between history (local tribal wars) and anthropology (culture, customs etc), which he pursues in a later letter. "I do not think it would do to mix up accounts of petty tribal wars with matter purely ethnographical. The latter is interesting to anthropologists but not so the former which is of local interest only and only to few." (Letter to Smith, 8.9.05, *ibid.*).

This is a seminal moment, for Best and for the Māori record in Pākehā literature: the meaning of Māori history, for Māori, is to be uncoupled from their essential being, now to be found solely in a form of anthropology that locates Māori authenticity in a bygone age. This apparently innocent division

of his subject is made more explicit in the next sentence: “My aim is to spend most time in hunting up matter regarding ancient rites etc which has for me a much deeper interest”. Best had grown weary of the endless and often conflicting accounts of local battles. Here, he takes no apparent account of the meaning of warfare for Māori, and its place in their pre-contact world order.¹²⁴ As a non-participant in that world, with no stake in the history, he preferred the romance of a past that contained esoteric mysteries. The ancient rites he was seeking could then be generalised into the systems of comparative mythology and religious evolution he had imbibed from his wide-ranging reading of Victorian anthropological theory and speculation. However, an anthropology that ignored the meaning of history to Māori would prove inadequate to describe the past, or the present.

The attitude implied in the expression “petty tribal wars” is the discounting of Māori history, vis a vis the self-evident value of European narratives – and the more appropriate absorption of that local history into a Western chronology in the form of anthropology. If Māori history, dependent as it was on oral narrative and conceived therefore as “pre-history” (ante-literate) could be absorbed into the colonial literature as primarily mythic and objectified, Pākehā like Best could take over ownership of Māori kōrero (stories) - and ventriloquise their voices, in the act of recording them for posterity.¹²⁵ A purely European literary record might mean that Māori would have their history confined to the textual museum. The finer points of this argument concern how conscious such an appropriation might be - and depend often on the viewpoint of the critic, Māori or Pākehā. At the very least, Best considered that if he did not collect this material, it would rapidly disappear with the deaths of men like Tutakangahau and Paitini; and that once he had done so,

¹²⁴ He wrote a series, “Notes on the Art of War”, for the *JPS*, between 1902-1906. A new edition edited by Jeff Evans was published by Reed (Auckland) in 2001.

¹²⁵ And subsequently, James Cowan, and a generation of Whitcombe and Tombs editors. The standard school history of New Zealand, Condcliffe’s (and later Airey’s) *Short History*, in print from 1925 to 1957, cites the following in its opening chapter on Māori exploration and settlement: Andersen, Best, Buck, Cowan, Firth, Grey, Hammond, Maning, Ngata, Smith and Tregear (Condcliffe, 1925, 15). With two exceptions, the standard authorities on Māori are Pākehā.

he had a responsibility to them, to himself, and to the emerging discipline of anthropology to publish their contributions to that “world of light”.

The letters reveal Best as a man on mission. There seems to be a connection – unexplained by him – between this kura and whakapapa, as the collection of whakapapa and his grasp of the kura are usually linked in the letters. It is important to see them in the context of Percy Smith’s agenda: he had engineered Best’s appointment, with the purpose of collecting information from Tuhoe about their antecedents, to bolster his use of a generational arithmetic to establish a chronology for Māori history. An early letter to Smith contained all these elements: the kura is at Te Whaiti and he will acquire it; from Whirinaki the next month, he writes of not “whakapapa-ing” for three weeks, but of his “faculty” who are writing them down and treasures that await him at Te Whaiti (Letter, 7.7.1895, *ibid.*). This language is of course poetic: but it displays a tendency to overload with a weight of expectancy whatever knowledge whakapapa and other kōrero bring to him. It is as if the richness of life in the surface of things is not enough to engage him – Tuhoe are a mystery to be penetrated by initiates only. They must first be invested with an exotic otherness, which Best produces, controls – and inhabits. It is this reality, a place into which he can “disappear from the world of light” with Tutakangahau as his guide, that Best seems determined to find.¹²⁶ His quest appears existential at times: explaining himself to himself, rather than Māori to the world. Local histories eventually bored him, irrelevant to such needs: the kura huna is Best’s name for his grail, and whakapapa are pathways back to an alternative reality – the pre-historic world of the stone age. Yet having an eye to the way Best code-switches from English to Māori in his letters to Smith, it is also reasonable to read “kura huna” as genuine scientific knowledge, the real information about Māori obtained from their lips. Best was after all a scientist and scholar in embryo, perhaps let down by

¹²⁶ Te ao marama”, the world of light, was used habitually throughout the 19th century to mean the new world brought in by Pākehā: it is this world Best escapes, yet returns to, as one who ultimately belongs.

the often romantic literary style he employed to express the findings of his research.

Writing that more prosaic commodity, Tuhoe history, preoccupied Best in the late 1900s: he told Smith they were “at cross-purposes” regarding the “Magnum Opus”; he didn’t want it to include tribal wars (as above), nor saw how it could appear in the *JPS* (Letter, 8.8.05, *ibid.*). By January of 1906 he had changed his mind, “resolved to take in the whole of Tuhoe once and for all and end”. He felt it was now or never, and had “been copying all Tuhoe historical notes under divers headings ever since.” (Letter, 3.1.06. *ibid.*). In a letter from Ruatoki in November, he declared, “ I have a taniwha (monster) before me. I began my Tuhoe history by a few remarks on the old original Toi and Potiki tribes of this district.” The ms was already so large (at “125 f/cap pp”) that Best estimated it would take seven years “to run the paper through the journal” (Letter, 11.6.06, *ibid.*). The book, completed in April 1907, was not to see the light of day until 1925. Best’s 1,700 foolscap pages emerged as a 1,200 page two volume work: volume one divided into two sections (a history of Tuhoe, then historical traditions, customs and beliefs); volume two, the Mātaatua whakapapa. The book will now be considered, focussing on concerns raised in the letters: whakapapa (origins) and the “kura huna” of Māori spirituality - the early signs of his interest in the high god thesis.

“*Tuhoe*”, Vol I, Pt II:iii.

Best’s work in the second half of *Tuhoe* (“myth and folklore”) signals a shift in his attention from the tribal histories of Part I, but also a step away from Smith and concentration on origins . He focuses on Tuhoe religious culture - in particular, the existence of a Māori high god, the supreme being, Io. He says that Tutakangahau knew of Io, but would say little about him. The old man was taught “Maori ritual” by his father in the 1840s; but Best does not mention that the father, Tapui knew the Christian scriptures by this time. The

missionary Colenso records in his travel diaries a visit to Toreatea marae in 1842 (see Chapter 6). Colenso was welcomed with a greeting “spiced with scriptural allusions”, at a time when Tutakangahau was in his early teens. We have already seen there was Christian influence on him late in his life; in fact, it began much earlier. If Io was an indigenous deity, there is no denying the opportunity to re-imagine him in Christian terms. Best writes of Io as primal parent, generating lesser gods, his existence and worship confined to an esoteric higher order of priests. His conversion to the Io thesis is rapid after this time, putting aside his early reservations. The issue here is that a secret cult controlled by a priestly few (however unlikely in a hunter-gatherer society such secrecy might be) was ripe at such a time of cultural upheaval and the conversion of permeable oral material to a textual fixity, to be taken over by a new priesthood: Pākehā experts.

Part II of Volume I has three sections: traditions, myth and folklore, and the spirit world. Focussing on the development of Best’s thinking, the analysis now moves from the letters to a section of *Tuhoe* which has special relevance to Best’s later writing: his early thoughts on a Māori high god, in the section on The Spirit World (Best, 1925, 1017ff). His earliest references to Io are linked directly to his relationship with Tutakangahau. Best’s role amongst Tuhoe initially was to be Smith’s eyes and ears in the search for evidence of Māori origins. He relied on the younger man’s collecting of whakapapa to reinforce his Great Fleet chronology: “a later migration of Polynesians that arrived on these shores about the years 1350, if we reckon twenty-five years to a generation” (ibid., 12). As observed in the letters, Best’s interests shifted over time and his relationship with Tutakangahau helped in this change of focus from Māori origins to Māori spirituality and primitive psychology. His observations amongst Tuhoe confirmed his adoption of Muller’s concept of a mythopoetic stage of human development. Speaking of the origins of important ancestors such as Potiki I, he writes: “They are the offspring of supernatural beings, of personifications of natural phenomena, sayeth the Maori”. In the case of Tuhoe: “They have sprung from their own savage

ranges, and from the white fog clouds which envelope them. They are begotten of Mother Nature; they are the Children of the Mist" (ibid., 23). In these early observations are the seeds of his later characterisations of the mythopoetical genius of the Māori psyche.

What were Best's ideas on Māori religious culture by 1907, and at the book's final publication date, 1925? According to his preface to the First Edition (ibid., viii), "On April 29, 1907, the writer completed this MS. and forwarded it to the Polynesian Society, and in the year of 1924, he again takes up a Tuhoean pen to write a brief preface thereto". If he did no work on the ms in the intervening years, how does this place the work? The Preface seems to suggest he did not: "...this sketch was written prior to our acquisition of the highly interesting data pertaining to the old-time Maori School of Learning of the Takitumu district of the North Island." Best is alluding here to the East Coast where wānanga Smith refers to in *The Lore of the Whare-wānanga* (Part 1), and specifically, the material transcribed by Te Whatahoro Jury from the teachings of Te Matorohanga and Nepia Pohuhu relating to Io, the Supreme Being (Smith, 1978 (1913), i-xvii, 80-84).

At this stage of his thinking, Best was attempting to defend earlier charges (by *some* missionaries and others) that Māori had no religion as understood by the "love and reverence for a Supreme Being"; rather they employed a system of placation and invocation, "*whakatara...*to stimulate by entreaty" (Best 1925, 1019). The tapu system, as he saw it, implied a "belief in gods who punish offences against them" in the here and now (ibid.). Karakia (incantations) he saw as essentially practical, "for the purpose of craving some boon of or averting some evil fortune" (ibid., 1022). Evil, or sin, was simply an "offence against the gods" and the "laws of *tapu* would appear to have largely usurped the place of true morality" (ibid., 1025). He cites Deniker in *The Races of Man*, on animists "giving a personality to every object they contemplate", and expounds his developing thesis on Maori personifications "of a mythopoetic nature". At the same time, he believed that "Maori religion embodied certain mystical conceptions, occult knowledge that was most

likely known only the higher order of the priesthood" (ibid., 1023). What follows is the first appearance in his writing about the possibility of a high god concept existing in pre-European Māori belief and practice.¹²⁷

Best argues that there were many atua in traditional Māori society, and the "adoption of this word by the early missionaries, to denote the Supreme God of the Christian religion, was not a happy choice; it is a solecism". He saw the incongruity of using a Māori word that implied a malignant being to describe "a loving and merciful God" (ibid. 1023). The Māori response to the Old Testament God of sacrifice and vengeance he saw as more in line with their own concepts (ibid., 1024). Māori religion was one dominated by a fear of the consequences if right action was not taken to placate a malignant spiritual pantheon as a result of tapu violations. He asserts that such moral codes as Māori did possess were "almost distinct from religion" (presumably Western religious models of belief and practice). Social control, he claims, was exercised through "public opinion and social conventions" (ibid., 1025).

He introduces Io into the discussion by referring to a widely held theory of degenerationism, suggesting some primitive societies had reverted to animism from an earlier developed belief in a Supreme Being, "the attractions of animism...supplanted theism"¹²⁸ (ibid.). While this seems strange for a committed progressivist, he is prepared to make an exception because "there is some proof to support such a theory, and a small modicum of such proof is presented in a very old Maori belief" (ibid., 1026). He gives a list of early Pākehā writers who had found evidence of Io: Colenso, Shortland, White, Mair, Hammond, Davis and Newman, and only one Māori (as at 1907) who knew anything about him: "Tutakangahau, of Maunga-pohatu, who, in the forties of the 19th century, was taught much of the old Maori ritual by his

¹²⁷ This work, deposited with the Polynesian Society in April 1907, predates by six months the Gudgeon-Paraone-Hongi article, "A Maori Cosmogony", which was the first examination of the high god thesis in the Society's Journal (*JPS* XVI: 63, September 1907, 109-119).

¹²⁸ The discussion here is limited to evidences for Io *inside* Best's writing, keeping the focus on the development of his theorisation of Māori spirituality.

father, Tapui"¹²⁹ (ibid., 1026). Best claims Tutakangahau said of Io: "*Ko Io, he reo no nehera tena. He atua no mua noa atu. Nana i whakaputa nga atua katoa. Koia te timatanga o nga atua*". (That is a very old doctrine. He was a god of very ancient times. He caused all the [other] gods to appear. He was the beginning of the gods). When Best later attempted to elicit more information, "the old man was as closed as the proverbial oyster". His family strongly disapproved of him giving this information, "the only subject on which he declined to talk" (ibid., 1027). Either the subject was extremely tapu, as Best implies, or there was no more to tell.

He returns to what Tutakangahau did tell him about Io, mingled with his own speculations: those sections of his reported speech follow, and then Best's comments: "Io was the primal god, the original god who existed in the very beginning of things, before the sky and earth were produced, though it was not stated that Io formed these. It was Io who caused all other gods to be, but he himself preceded them [Tutakangahau]"¹³⁰ (ibid., 1027). Best continues, "Unfortunately, I gained no knowledge of the attributes, functions, manifestations or ritual of this deity. Nor are we aware that any offerings were made to him...". The old man "did not speak of Io as though he was one of the malignant gods or demons" [Tutakangahau], "nor did he ascribe any vengeful feelings to him [Tutakangahau]" (ibid.). "Whatever the cult of Io may have been, it was probably of an esoteric form, practised by the higher order of the priesthood alone [Best]". From what Tutakangahau said about "the lower orders of *tohunga*, it seems highly probable that they would not be allowed to take part in the ritualistic functions pertaining to Io [Best]" (ibid.). He concludes: "It is quite evident that this mystical concept of a primal god was an extremely ancient one among the Māori people, and certainly not due to the teachings of the Christian missionaries in the last century. Moreover, this belief in Io is the finest theistic conception that we meet in Maori tradition [Best]" (ibid.).

¹²⁹ Tapui descends from Tane-atua, and was of Ngati-Maru of Maungapohatu (see Genealogical Table no. 11, *Tuhoe* vol 2, and *Tuhoe* 223). So far I have been able to find no further mention of these teachings in Best.

¹³⁰ To avoid confusion, the speakers or writers in this section are signalled [].

The implications of Tutakangahau's role here will be discussed further in Chapter 6. We may note the way Best assembles a high god from so little evidence: there are no apparent rituals, so this must be an esoteric cult with a priestly hierarchy. Even although he has not established that there were rituals, he accepts what Tutakangahau says about orders of *tohunga*, and the implied existence of such practices.¹³¹ He is quick to exclude any possibility of Christian influence,¹³² yet a few pages further on, gives the old man's account of the arrival of missionaries in the 1840s (*ibid.*, 1030). With so little evidence, it seems premature to describe the belief in Io as "the finest theistic conception that we meet with in Maori tradition" (*ibid.*, 1027). Did he mean intellectually elevated, an example of abstract thought in the midst of animism and anthropomorphism? While it is not clear in this instance, the phrasing precedes Best's later language, valorising Māori intellectual achievement, in spite of their assigned place on the ladder of evolutionary progress.

A brief *whakapapa* from Io to Tiki is inserted in the discussion, "given by a member of the Ngai-Tahu tribe who, being a Christian young man, of course identifies Io with Jehovah" (*ibid.*, 1028). Both these defences of Io's indigeneity are speculative: that the cult is ancient, and that there is no reason to believe the Ngai-Tahu informant's identification of Io with the Christian God. Best then concedes that it is unlikely much will emerge about the cult's nature: "Whether or not the cult of Io was an ethical religion we shall probably never know*" (*ibid.*). The asterisk notes, * "Since this was written much information pertaining to the cult of Io has been collected". Knowing when this note was added, and if the above was actually finished, and submitted to the Polynesian Society by 1907 would assist the analysis here. It is fair to assume the ms was submitted by Best at the early date he claims, and

¹³¹ There is no empirical evidence for "orders of *tohunga*" in traditional Māori society.

¹³² Best weighs in here to the Lang-Tylor debate, on Lang's side. Tylor, in "The Limits of Savage Religion" argued against Lang, stating that the high god thesis, in such situations, was a direct – and indirect – Christian influence (Tylor, 1891, 283-301). See Smith, Johnathan Z., for a full discussion of *Urmonotheismus* (Smith, 1982, 66-89).

footnotes like the above added prior to publication in 1925. It appears he did not wish to revisit the work by way of a substantial revision at that late stage. Certainly, in the last five years of his life, he was racing against time to publish other major works.

Examples follow of High God doctrines degenerating in practice. He speaks of witnessing a degenerate Catholicism in northern Mexico, during his US sojourn in the 1880s. He speculates that Io was known and worshipped by ancestors of Māori

at some remote time when they dwelt in some far land as a nation, or at least a congeries of tribes...(and that after) these people moved into the Pacific...they became separated...this cult of Io became eclipsed by Nature worship and animistic conceptions – or, was confined to the few, an esoteric cultus (ibid., 1029).

The vagueness of the above passage indicates he was not then on secure ground with the subject. This is apparent in the next section, which deals with the evolution of a Māori atua, a specific Tuhoe war god - Best is much more authoritative when dealing with concrete instances.

Further to his thoughts on Maori spirituality, Best makes comments about "*Ringa tu*" amongst Tuhoe and Tutakangahau's narration of the arrival and acceptance of Christianity among his people. "The Maori of the present day is keenly religious. He seems to take much interest in his peculiar brand of Christianity, and is fond of attending numerous services". He gives a clear picture of their worship: "*Ringa tu*", based on the Scriptures, two or more services are held each day, at which one person repeats certain prayers, while the whole of the people assembled join in singing psalms"¹³³ (ibid.). Māori Christianity was a problem to Best: he argues in the next section on atua that a Māori would avail himself "of any *atua* as a war god if he thought that its prestige and powers were greater than the demon he had been utilising for

¹³³ Best must have attended and observed these services, despite his antipathy to the effects of the missionaries and the Bible on Māori.

that purpose”¹³⁴ (ibid., 1052). He notes the adoption of “Jesus as a war god” in 1836 at the battle of Toka-a-kuku, arguing that this was “an illustration of how a high type of religion degenerates when adopted by a barbaric people” (ibid., 1053). His theoretical model is not adequate to analysing such diverse and changing Maori responses to Christianity as are instanced by Tutakangahau, in 1836, and the 1890s, with the rise of Rua, which Best witnessed. His belief in “culture stages” implied that Māori (and other peoples on a “lower stage”) could not genuinely access Christianity, a more intellectually evolved religion. They needed the type of intellectual culture that had produced such a faith - which assumes the prior development of literacy.¹³⁵

Best believed if Māori had evolved a belief in a supreme being, they “[could not] be accused of atheism”. He cannot be sure if the cult is a survival, or an explanation for the minor gods and has little time for degradationalist thinking “as concerning Maori religion”. To him, “different conditions and phases have existed side by side...the cult of Io the Supreme Being...was the aristocratic cultus” (ibid., 1040-1041). He finds it difficult to accept primitive man embracing monotheism (Andrew Lang supports this, Vignoli is against it): “In any case the Maori Io seems to have been an uncreated god, the original deity who existed long before death was known, long before any of the deified personifications, or deified ancestors were known” (ibid., 1040). While he believes in the evolutionary progress of human religion, he is reluctant to accept any regress - that Māori might have reverted from high god worship, to animism. His answer is to posit concurrent phases of “religious beliefs and practices [existing] side by side” (ibid., 1041). This enables him to theorise a hierarchy with “the cult of Io the Supreme Being...confined to the few”. Such speculative elements in Best’s later writings of the Urewera period are at odds with his earlier work amongst Tuhoe.¹³⁶ In the following two decades, which saw the publication of Percy

¹³⁴ See following discussion on the 1907 JPS article, “Te Rehu-o-Tainui”.

¹³⁵ The “co-evolution of religion and civilisation” was a given for Best: religions with a Supreme Being (like Christianity) came packaged with an attendant civilisation. See *JPS*, Vol 1. (Best, 1892, 197, 201)

¹³⁶ See following section, *JPS* articles, from 1897 onwards.

Smith's *The Lore of the Whare-wananga*, the argument for Io became irresistible.¹³⁷ In the section which follows, this speculative element in Best's work is contrasted with the more forensic content of his early fieldwork amongst Tuhoe.

Articles in the *Journal of the Polynesian Society* (JPS), 1897-1907.

The journal articles of this phase constitute Best's most sustained period of collection, analysis and intellectual growth: the emergence of the scholar of things Māori. They show a deepening emphasis on Māori spirituality, as with "Te-Rehu-o-Tainui: the origin and development of a Māori atua" (god) in 1897. These early mature writings are based on observation and discussion, firmly located and a world away from the speculative material seen on Io in *Tuhoe*. "Spiritual Concepts of the Maori" (1900) continues this trend, with illustrations of such terms as wairua, hau and mauri (which latter term will be fully examined in the final chapter). Here we see Best disputing once more with the missionary Taylor and commenting negatively on the syncretistic practices of those Tuhoe who hedge their bets by chanting ancient karakia (prayers) - while entreating the aid of the Christian god. He sees them as trying - and failing - to live in two worlds: "The Maori as Maori is passing, although the blood will remain with us" (1904). Culture here is distinguished from genetics: a remnant left in the blood of the billiard-playing Māori youth, mentioned later in his journalism. They can never be the real thing, now the authentic Māori have all but gone.¹³⁸ Best's focus shifts gradually over this period: from gathering raw material for later rewriting, into his time as museum ethnographer in Wellington (1910-1931). He spent these museum years struggling to edit and write his major works – but his thinking on Māori was virtually set by the time he left the Urewera.

¹³⁷ See Simpson, Jane, for a recent attempt to account for the origins of the Io thesis (Simpson, 1997).

¹³⁸ See in following section on Journalism, "The Last of the Maori", *The Canterbury Times*, 1897.

Articles that appeared in the *JPS* from 1897 onwards displayed a much more focussed approach to both material and spiritual culture. This section will examine a sample of his major articles which were serialised in the journal: “Te Rehu-o-Tainui: the evolution of a Maori *ATUA*”, Vol VI: 22, June 1897, (41-66); “Omens and Spiritual Beliefs of the Maori, Pt I”, Vol VII: 27, 1898, (119-136); Pt II (233-243); “Notes on Maori Mythology” - “The Origin and Personification of the Heavenly Bodies &c”, Vol VIII, no. 30, June, 1899, (93-121); “Spiritual Concepts of the Maori, Pt I”, Vol IX: 36, Dec. 1900. (173-199); Pt II, Vol X: 37, March 1901, (1-19); “Maori Medical Lore”, Vol XIII, no.52, December 1904, Pt 1, (213-237); “Maori Medical Lore, Pt 1,contd”, 1905: vol XIV: no 1, 53 (March), Rituals and cures, (1-9); “The Lore of the Whare-Kohanga: notes on procreation among the Maori people of New Zealand, 1905: Vol. XIV:4, no. 56, December, and pts I-V, up to 1907. The aim will be to follow the application and development of Best’s thinking on Māori as it evolved in his years living amongst Tuhoe.

Te Rehu-o-Tainui (*JPS*, Vol VI: 22, June 1897, 41-66). This article, appearing two years after Best’s arrival in the Urewera, is a substantial piece on “the evolution of a Maori *Atua*”, being notes on the “development and manifestations of a New Zealand War-God” (*ibid.*, 41). He states that this constitutes “ the first case in which the origin and development of an *atua* have been traced” (*ibid.*, 42). He attempts here to understand Māori on their own terms – the article is far different from his writings on the Aitea in 1892, reliant on the theories and the observations of others. Best never went to the Philippines, but was now trying to practise Müller’s prescription for the genuine anthropologist: living amongst the people, and speaking their language.¹³⁹ Of all those Best spoke to at this time, Tutakangahau was the major informant: he wrote to Smith of walking to Maungapohatu in a day and a half, “to get Tu to straighten out that gentle atua for me...” (February 3rd, 1895).¹⁴⁰

¹³⁹ See *Anthropological Religion* (Müller, 1898, 151-152).

¹⁴⁰ See Craig, Elsdon, “Notes for a biography”, (71), MS-Papers-7888-024, ATL.

This atua, writes Best, “a war-god of Te Ure-wera or Tuhoe tribe” had existed for five generations, its history “well preserved in the unwritten archives of Tuhoe-land” (*JPS*, *ibid.*). In describing its evolution, he incorporates Māori cultural history in a Western schema of religious development. He uses this opportunity to document an example: a woman of Tamakaimoana, Rehutu, has a stillborn child (Hope-motu) the spirits of which were dreaded (kahukahu). Best says in this case, the powers of the foetus (whakatahe) were not destroyed; it evolved into a moko-kakariki, or green lizard. Not an atua in itself, but the aria, or incarnation, the lizard is the form of the atua seen by human eyes: “it is not known where the true god may be - for that is but an essence, an unseen power which we cannot explain” (*ibid.*, 42,43).

He writes that this atua was about to become a man-eating god (atua-ngau-tangata). Uhia, a member of Tamakaimoana, set off with an offering (porete, or kakariki, the green parakeet) to the newborn atua: “thus Uhia became the *kauwaka* or medium of the spirit Hope-motu...and gave the god the name Te Rehu-o-Tainui” (*ibid.*, 43). Through the matakite (prophecies) of the atua, the tohunga Uhia and his oracles spread the fame of Te Rehu-o-Tainui wherever Tuhoe went into battle. Best claims to have met a descendant of this kauwaka, Uhia II, who was ten years old in 1896. The remainder of the article recounts the various battles in which the atua’s prophecies through Uhia led to many Tuhoe victories. The “unwritten archives” of Tuhoe history eventually merge with the battles that occurred after European settlement (1861, 1867), long after Uhia himself had died and other tohunga had taken his place, never acquiring the “marvellous power and prestige of the *atua’s* first *waka*” (*ibid.*, 65).

Best’s description of this local atua is clear and concise, and mostly free of his stylistic quirks (archaisms, gratuitous personal prejudices). At times he appears to take on the persona an informant, and at one point, speaking in the first person plural says “we of the *ariki-taniwha** know that the real form of a god, if it have a form, is never seen of mortal eyes” (*ibid.*, 44). The footnote explains, “* *Ariki*, firstborn in male line of descent; *taniwha*, here used as

representing esoteric knowledge: of the highborn priestly caste". Whether he sees himself as one such, or is quoting a *tohunga*, is not quite clear.¹⁴¹ The piece concludes with an unsourced quote, telling how the latter-day mediums of the *atua* were not "of the men of old" and it was "Tuhoe who fell" (*ibid.*, 65). The fight had gone out of this speaker and his generation, as they passed "into old age and decay like unto the trees of the forest". The soliloquy laments the coming of the Pākehā with his guns and missionaries, destroying the old ways. "Then Te Rehu-o-Tainui and the gods of our ancestors forsook us forever. For we had trampled upon the ancient *tapu*. That was the end" (*ibid.*, 66).

While this conclusion may be a form of the reported *kōrero* (story), it takes away from the quality of the article as ethnographic writing. It begins to sound like an epitaph for a dying people. The article is in stark contrast to his early Io theories in *Tuhoe*, discussed earlier, written at around the same period. This *atua* is grounded in locality, and woven into a material and political universe: involved with Tuhoe in their world and their concerns. The *kauwaka* was a man, Uhia, with a man's job – to guide his people to victory in battle. What is more, Best could speak to one of his descendants face-to-face. Te Rehu-o-Tainui is embodied, and fights for Tuhoe. Io, by comparison, is a conceptual figure; in some ways, more rarified even than the Christian god. Jehovah of the Old Testament made covenants with human beings, and involved himself in the fabric of local history for universal purposes. Jesus Christ in the New Testament made a more personal appearance, and his claimed agents to Māori, the missionaries, were also manifestly human. Whether humanity invents gods, or gods create humans, there is always a profound and materialised *relationship*, which at the very least satisfies or answers some aspect of human psychology. The discomfiting quality of Io is his remoteness, and temporal irrelevance - like the clockwork being of a Deist theology. In short, this *atua* seems authentic, while Io sounds faked.

¹⁴¹ In *Waikaremoana*, published in the same year, Tutakangahau refers to himself as "an *ariki-taniwha*", which Best footnotes as "Lord of dragons" (Best, 1897 (1975), 49).

His next piece touching on Māori spirituality, or psychology is more speculative. “Omens and Superstitious Beliefs of the Maori Pt 1” (*JPS*, Vol VII: 27, 1898, 119-136; Pt 2: 233-243) which catalogues examples Best had witnessed amongst Tuhoe, is a reminder of the thinking on display in the 1892 article on the Aitea.

The workings of the primitive mind are passing strange and in the early culture stage man would be guided by his senses, thus it is not singular that he should believe all moving waters, rustling trees, winds and heavenly bodies to be possessed of some kind of life spirit. And doubtless such beliefs were the first origin of religion... (238).

The twin planks of his developing thought are clear: an essentialised primitive and an ordered hierarchy of human cultural evolution. Combined with a fascination for the origin of religious response and ritual, these shaped his view of Māori culture in its non-material aspects.

Best pursued his search for the pristine Māori the following year in “Notes on Maori Mythology” - “The Origin and Personification of the Heavenly Bodies &c” (*JPS*, Vol VII, no. 30, June, 1899, 93-121). He begins by discussing personification in Māori mythology, and their power of abstract thought: “We cannot but be struck by the general personification or allegorization of natural phenomena...As a *mythopoetic people* [mine], the Maori can assuredly claim to rank with any nation”, whose mythological systems were known at that time (*ibid.*, 93). In defending his methods, he says he is simply examining “different fragments of ancient history, mythology and folklore”, to extract notes which “albeit crudely arranged, may be of some interest to students of Comparative Mythology” - especially those influenced by Müller and Tylor. This is ingenuous: he is doing much more, arguing for a revaluation of Māori culture, and dismissing prejudicial attitudes towards their intellectual achievements. The danger is that the defender can become an aggressor of sorts, taking control of the material he publishes, as well as disseminating the new knowledge.

The defence of Māori “mental abilities” which follows was a developing theme: in “The Races of the Philippines” (1892), Best had claimed that those on the “culture planes” of savagery and barbarism were incapable of abstract thought. His contacts in Tuhoe led him on to argue their capacity for “abstract ideas...[and] metaphysical reasoning” (ibid.). Studying Māori mythology would destroy any such prejudice, along with examining their “belief in the spiritual nature or essences of man”. Five years earlier, he had confirmed the inability of “savages” to employ abstract thought: in the first two years of close contact with Tuhoe, he changed his mind. It appears most likely that in getting to know his informants, and absorbing the richness of Tuhoe culture, Best had undergone a kind of conversion - he began arguing for a more elevated view of Māori psychology and attainments. In his view, “Neolithic Maori” had sought understanding of the “subjective world” without the benefit of a “searchlight of Western knowledge”, i.e., Enlightenment scientific method. They had groped their way towards knowledge of “the mystery of life...natural phenomena...[and] the origin of things”. Equipped with lesser tools (a stone age versus iron age comparison), they had made faint progress in the “realms of psychology, psychomancy, oneirology, ontology, eschatology and other dimly lighted regions”¹⁴² (ibid.).

Māori then, albeit with their unsophisticated tools, must be taken as seriously as inner voyagers, as they were for their prowess on the ocean. Overtaken by a superior level of civilisation, they were not to be underestimated, nor their pre-European cultural achievements despised. Held back by ignorance and superstition, Best argues, they were still treading the same road of “progress” as Pākehā. They simply had not gone as far. The remainder of the article examines “the personification of the heavenly bodies, of the seasons, of trees, of stones”, and their powers of “speech, of locomotion, of generation” (he discusses an origin story of Mata-atua, given by Hamiora Pio of Ngati-Awa) (ibid., 118-119). He concludes by saying he has demonstrated the inherent

¹⁴² This list of “-ologies” has the taint of auto-didacticism. Psychomancy (inviting the dead to consult the living) may indicate Best’s interest in, or involvement with, occult phenomena. See *Māori Religion and Mythology, Pt 2*, (1982) on theosophy, wairua and the etheric double (astral body) (42).

interest in the subject, “if studied by a competent person and placed before us in an attractive form” (ibid., 119). Viewed favourably, this could be interpreted as saying that, approached with a sympathetic intelligence (like his), and mediated systematically, Māori world-views were open to Pākehā. Another interpretation might be that competency to conduct such a study lay with the Europeans, and that the “attractive form” was the arrangement of the material (e.g. whakapapa, creation myths) to serve Western chronologies and fit with European concepts of human origins.

This is clearly the case in the next major article on Māori spirituality Best published in the journal: “Spiritual Concepts of the Māori, Pts I & II” (Pt I, Vol IX: 36, Dec., 1900, 173 – 199; Pt II, Vol X: 37, March 1901, 1 – 19). He begins by discussing a review he had seen in the *London Times* of Andrew Lang’s *The Making of Religion* (1900). The reviewer warns against studying “savage life with preconceived ideas as to the religions of savages...to find just what falls in with [the student’s] theories” (cited in Best, 1900, 174). Best wholeheartedly agrees with this, and with another comment: that savages “have ideas as to the mysteries of life much like those of civilised nations”. Many “singular phenomena of human life” still puzzle the civilised, Best says; yet the “key to, and knowledge of [these mysteries are now] retained by barbarous and semi-civilised people alone” (ibid.). He instances firewalking, a “strange power held by divers races from Asia far into Polynesia...a power which was undoubtedly possessed by the higher class of native priests among the Maori.” Unfortunately, he offers no examples of the practice.

After warning against preconceptions, Best displays his own: that those below the civilised plane of culture possessed secret knowledge: that there existed a hierarchy of priests in traditional Māori society who owned this esoterica. These are the seeds of the Io cult theories, the kura huna Best had written of to Percy Smith. The role of the colonial ethnographer was to unveil and record these “mysteries” and in so doing, re-imagine pre-contact Māori society, writing up this material as an authentic account of traditional society. The loop closed when Māori themselves accepted and defended the revised

version as indigenous, and bought into the power of secrets. The attraction of secrets was increased – and the syncretism affirmed – in a landscape where military and political power for Māori were minimal, and their retreat to the margins encouraged mystification, a withholding of the last dregs of inward, spiritualised property. Those like Best become power brokers, and their informants become mere guides. The commodification of the secrets also had a commercial aspect, supplying reward and status for the participants.¹⁴³

Best continues by arguing against the notion that Māori have no powers of abstract thought; he claims he has information “taken down directly from the lips of native speakers” that will disprove this. These informants are “the elderly men of the Tuhoe tribe, the most conservative of Maoris...who have ever held themselves aloof from the intruding *pakeha* (European)” (ibid., 174). This is patently inaccurate: one example alone, Best’s own description of Tutakangahau witnessing the missionaries in the 1840s, shows Tuhoe, like most Māori, engaged with the intruders: “that was why we accepted Christianity” (Best, 1925, 1030-1031). Tuhoe were hardly aloof when they joined the fight at Orakau, nor when, as war veterans, they journeyed to Wellington to talk with Seddon and Maui Pomare as the Urewera Native District Reserve was being created in 1896, prior to the time of Best’s writing. He can also be found - discussed later in this chapter - writing for *The Press* in 1897 that Tuhoe had driven pigs to market in Auckland, and their young men were shearing in the Bay of Plenty. This assertion of Tuhoe aloofness is not about history; it seems more to do with the writer assuring the reader he has the confidence of “native speakers”, and so is able to construct an accurate account of the Māori psyche. Best is making a subtle claim for himself: that as the first Pākehā to gain the trust of Tuhoe, he is the first authentic interlocutor.

He proceeds to explain that the different “culture stage” occupied by Māori qualifies the nature of their abstract thought. His thesis is that higher cultures

¹⁴³ Best wrote to Smith (undated): “Pio writes me that he has filled the book I sent him with answers to a lot of patai. The old man struck for wages, so I sent him £1 wh. seems to have satisfied him” (ATL, MS-Papers-1187-249, 3).

have “but one spirit or essence pertaining to man”, but those “not so far advanced on the road to mental progress” tend to endow man with a multiple spiritual nature. He compares the Māori wairua to the Egyptian Ka, “a double, a kind of shadowy self”, but Māori themselves were on a “lower round of the ladder of progress” (ibid., 174-175). They possessed the “power of abstraction sufficiently to endow man with a spirit...and other subtle qualities or essences”. However, they had not “advanced to a conception of heaven” where “the spirit of man takes up its abode at death” (ibid., 175). He links the evolution of the belief in a spirit or soul “with the growth of written language”. The development of literacy as marker for cultural progress will be examined more closely in Chapter 5.

As much as Best had rejected Christian doctrine, he was still operating within a Judaeo-Christian paradigm, imbued with the coexistence of a Christian framework *and* civilisation. He says that “a culture stage forms or evolves its own grade of religion” and that an “inferior race” could not be elevated to a “high plane of religious feeling or morality” by adopting “the outer forms of a superior religion”. The example he gives is “so-called Christian Maori...deeply imbued with superstition at the present day as obtained in the last century” (ibid.). Holding Māori in this tension, capable of more sophisticated thinking than they were given credit for, yet incapable of grasping Christian doctrine along with its cultural forms, illustrates a conflict in Best’s position. He is both defender and denigrator: Maori are found to be superior if kept on their socio-evolutionary plane, but fail the test of civilised sophistication if, when adopting Anglicised forms of historic Christianity, they preserve many of their own beliefs in the cross-generational stages of transition.

Māori were not agnostics, he explains, but really, they “worshipped nothing” – their so-called gods “were beings to be feared, not loved” (ibid., 176). There is little trace of Io here, except for his claim that that “Maori religion was

essentially of an esoteric nature".¹⁴⁴ The strange powers of the "old time *tohunga* or priest" are given in a list of technical terms (ontology, physiocracy) that "closely resembled those of ancient India and the pre-Semitic peoples of Chaldea". They were, he claims, "jealously guarded and taught but to few carefully selected neophytes of each generation" (ibid.). Readers are invited to study "the Maori conception of the spiritual attributes of man". This will draw them "outside the radius applying strictly to such beliefs", along other "paths of abstract thought, as trodden by the ancient Maori in his crude endeavour to discover what life is, whence it comes and wither it may go...". Once again, Best writes as if caught between a desire to treat his subject with respect, and a measure of objectivity, while at the same time compelled to reassure himself and his readers that they are looking at all this from higher plane of cultural development.

The remainder of Part I examines a list of Māori terms for matters spiritual: *wairua*, *hau*, *mauri* and *manawa et al*, which continue into Part II (March, 1901).¹⁴⁵ Rather than enumerate individual definitions, the aim here will be to draw out ways in which Best sought European and Christian analogues to illustrate his definitions, and his use of earlier Pākehā authorities. Writing of *mauri*, "the spark of life, or spiritual life principle", he refers to "White's 'Ancient History of the Maori,' vol. iii, p.24" as a point of illustration. (White, 1887, 24) He quotes the words of "an ancient invocation to restore the dead (*whakanoho manawa*)", conferring the authority of the European source on his text (Best, 1901, 3). He also reasons from classical and Christian analogy (after condemning the same in Richard Taylor): "The Greek *thymos* more nearly equals the Maori *mauri* than any other term I have met with". Best was essentially self-taught, and his classical learning would not have been of the same standard as Richard Taylor's, which Best scorned.

¹⁴⁴ It seems that the "Io conversation" he had with Tutakangahau, written up in 1907, had not occurred at this point. Craig claims Best broached the subject with Ngahoro and Tutakangahau, and was fobbed off (Craig, 1964, 70-72).

¹⁴⁵ Best reworked and republished much of these early writings in *The Spiritual and Mental Concepts of the Maori*, Dominion Museum Monograph No. 2 (Best, 1954 (1922)). The influence of Best's definitions – his classification of Māori spiritual terms – is discussed at length in the concluding chapter.

Best disagrees with Taylor's biblical rendering of *mauri* "the living soul", but uses a scriptural analogy to differentiate between "human *mauri*" and the "realm of material *mauri*" (ibid., 4). He claims that the Hebrew ark of the covenant "was a *mauri* in one sense" and also an "*ariaa* or symbol of the divine presence". When the Philistines defeated the Hebrews, they carried away the symbol of God's presence, "without which it were vain for Israel to appear in battle".¹⁴⁶ This, says Best, "is purely Maori" (ibid.). "Then came the time of great shame for Israel", he notes again from scriptural account - "naturally, for they had lost the *mauri* of their fighting god." While this is clever and apt, it shows the impossibility of translating spiritual concepts cross-culturally without the use of analogy, revising the original in the process: this is the contradiction of value-free anthropology. Best knows he is addressing a European audience steeped in Renaissance and Reformation typologies. Not only is this material abstracted from its Māori source, there is no real intention of it returning there. If Best had truly wished to create a Māori anthropology, his challenge would have been to write in Māori first, for Māori primarily, with the clear admission that all the pristine sources of information were long gone, after a century of increasing European influence on Māori cultural forms.

This same process is seen in his discussion of *manawa* and *manawa-ora* ("the life-breath", 7-11). Citing an informant, Hamiora Pio, Best illustrates a Māori use of *manawa ora*: "In describing the forming of Adam from earth, old Pio of Ngati-Awa said: '*Ka whakahangia atu te manawa ora, kua ara mai a Arama*' – the breath of life was breathed into him and Adam arose" (ibid., 9). There is an obvious Christian influence on Best's source here, yet he is willing to use this example to illustrate Māori spiritual concepts. This demonstrates an inability to hold a nuanced view of the Māori situation: Best considered himself equipped to mediate cultural information, without first

¹⁴⁶ Direct quote from 1 Samuel 4: 7 – 6:21.

acknowledging that his perceptions and the sources themselves were “contaminated” due to the permeable nature of all human knowledge.

He compares the “*ngakau* and its functions with the *phrenes*, as used by Homer (see Max Müller’s *Anthr. Religion*)”; the German philologist was a favoured text in his auto-didactic library. He was also not averse to using his own experience, to instance the meaning of *ahua* (ibid., 12,14).

When Hakopa, a withered old warlock of Tuhoe, who fought against us at Orakau, meets me, his invariable greeting is, ‘Greetings to you, the *ahua* of the men of old.’ His meaning is that I am the semblance, or am endowed with the personality of the old time Maori, on account of my incessant search after the history, customs, &c., of bygone generations. This echoes his earlier claim to Smith that he “could think like a savage”.¹⁴⁷ The conceit of likeness, or having the personality of the pre-European Māori is both romantic and atavistic. The same “old-time Maori” lived their history and customs in present time; Best’s collecting of their remnants makes him exactly *other* to the men of old. His obsession and absorption with these things were the fruit of his personality, and his position in European culture. He may have *felt* himself to be of another time, yet he was very much of his own, as were the other colonial “collectors”.

He concludes with a form of apology for his “rough notes...roughly arranged”; he has no aptitude for “forming well turned sentences or proper systematic arrangements” (ibid., 20). There is also the standard elegy for the dying race, but with an unusual metaphoric twist: the Māori body politic made *noa* (common, void of tapu) by the multiple impacts of colonisation:

For the Maori of Pani and of a swift passing world has been rudely awakened from a most strange mental state. He will not survive the shock, but will pass out with his *wairua* from a body that has become *noa*, and the life principle of which has lost its virtue (ibid.).

¹⁴⁷ See letter to Percy Smith, 29.1.96, Best MS-Papers-0072-08, ATL.

This is Best's valediction to those Māori fatalists, "conservative and contemptuous" who saw in him the semblance of the ancients – yet he is deeply *modern* at this point, eulogising at an imagined extinctionary moment. What the extinctionists failed to realise was that the "death", or massive alteration of an entire worldview, did not imply the death of all of those who had once inhabited that world, nor their descendants.

The next *Journal* article – published in 1904 - concerns Māori medical lore. In the course of reviewing Māori attitudes to illness (its causes, he says, were believed to be tapu violation and mākutū, witchcraft), he makes further statements that reveal his ideological positions (Best, *JPS*, Vol XIII, no 52, December 1904, Pt I, 213 – 237). Writing of Hamiora Pio (1823-1902), he proposes a "superior culture stage" occupied by Europeans, and says in relation to Māori psychology "we shall never know the inwardness of the native mind [except by]...retracing our steps...to the time we possessed the mind of primitive man" (ibid., 218-219). Yet this is impossible, for "never more shall we return to that mental state, that plane of evolution" (ibid., 220). Best in the Urewera is voicing standard evolutionist doctrines. While critical of the missionary paradigm, he has his own gospel of progress and extinction. To illustrate this, Best cites Pio on "this generation, born among the white men", whose mauri has "become polluted"; how, his informant asks, can they survive: "me aha ra tatou e ora ai?" (ibid., 221). His answer Best records as "let us return to the beliefs of the Maori, the rites of old". Pio interpreted the volcanic Tarawera eruption of 1886 as "a sign for the Maori, who have deserted their ancient customs" (ibid., 222). This strategy of returning to a past that has buckled and fragmented under the impact of European settlement is contrasted with the reality Best sees: "at present the thinking Maori...is bewildered...the streams have united and will be separate no more". Whether these "streams" are genetic, cultural or spiritual, the water metaphor acknowledges a pollution, or de-sacralisation (whakanoa) that will prove irreversible.

Pio's answer is compared to another informant's, almost certainly Tutakangahau: "In this wise, I have an old friend here...I have known him pray to the God of the white man...and also, to perform the ancient *tohi* rite over his sons...*he is, in his anxiety, trying to tread both paths at once, to drift on parted waters* [mine]" (ibid., 222). Best's interpretation of this man's actions, covering himself by appealing to the new and the old gods, varies the previous water metaphor. Pio will not acknowledge a union that cannot be undone; "Tutakangahau" is said to be in confusion, by acknowledging the twin streams as co-existent and accessing both. How can Best resolve what he acknowledges: that the meeting of Māori and Pākehā has destroyed the old world, and that for Maori, as losers in the military contest, a series of unpalatable choices arise out of that meeting?¹⁴⁸ The problem, as he sees it, is a result of cultural transformation; an outward adoption of Western belief systems: "But the Maori is a Christian - the missionaries tell us so". This sarcasm prefaces Best's opinion that converts he saw were behaving "as any primitive people on whom the outward forms of that faith *have been forced* [mine]" (ibid., 223). This denial of agency to those Māori, who for whatever variety of reasons, chose Christianity, and adapted it to their needs, is as patronising as the unproven forced conversion he posits. Underlying the pernicious effect of missionary teaching is the real explanation of Maori decline: evolutionary inevitabilities. Best's explanation is simply, "... 'the displacement of species'. That is nearer the mark - the evolution of the human race, the survival of the fittest, call it what you will. *The Maori, as the Maori, is passing, although the blood will remain with us*" [mine] (ibid.).

In this model, culture is seen as a spiritual essence, and blood (= race) as stasis: "the Maori, as the Maori", as if they had always been the same, changeless, and beyond cultural transformation. He implies the diluted genetic survival of a race, as brown-skinned Pākehā, in no way truly Māori. Best was correct that pre-contact culture had undergone massive change, and

¹⁴⁸It is tempting to ascribe a kind of Freudian slip here: is he identifying with these men, subconsciously, and outlining something of his own dilemma? He faces choices as well, in a vanishing frontier where present realities dictated changes for his type of Pākehā, as well as for Māori. Best's world was also fading.

at the time he was writing, many of his older informants were struggling to accommodate the impact of colonisation. Yet Māori had engaged with modernity decades earlier, and were by this time resisting, negotiating, and acting to both preserve and progress their position in the new order. To locate a Māori cultural essence in the past, and mere genetic survival in the future, took a rigid and unrealistic view of the porosity of human exchanges. Tutakangahau, for example, who Best looked to as a doorway to “the Maori, as the Maori”, had already passed through many such adaptations to the majority culture: from literacy, to Ringatu, and his late-life role as a District Commissioner. Best would hardly have said he was not truly Māori. This was a further denial of Maori agency, in the guise of evolutionary science. Such thinking, loosely derived from evolutionary theory, conveniently rationalised the impact of military superiority, disease, land deals and confiscations, and the sheer swamping of Māori by Pākehā, at the turn of the century.

His next major study (concerning procreation), “The Lore of the Whare-kohanga” is also a rich source of his thinking in several areas: personifications, Europeanisation (especially Christian influence), and early traces of the Io thesis¹⁴⁹ (Best, *JPS*, Vol XIV: 4, no. 56, December 1905, Pt I, 205 - 215, and Pts II-V, 1906, 1907). The argument opens with a discussion of animism and a “universal vivification of nature: a *personification and application of sex to natural phenomena and inanimate objects* [mine]” (Best, 1905, 206). Best argues that these personified figures are not allegorical, i.e. symbolic beings, generalising truths of human nature, but rather forms of abstract ideas, or continued metaphors: “This process of primitive thought was even applied to the period when man had not yet appeared on earth” (ibid.). Rangi and Papa were preceded by mythical beings “long ages before that there were a series of gods, or allegorised eras or forces; and these personifications were also endowed with sex and produced young”. Sex in Māori myth, he derives from the bisexual beings, Te Pu and Te More, who issued from Te Rangi-matinitini and Te Ao-matinitini. After a series of other

¹⁴⁹ Between pp 210-211, a whakapapa from Io is inserted by Smith into Best’s text.

beings come Rangi and Papa, then demi-gods with supernatural power, including Tane-nui-a-rangi, who through Kurawaka, daughter of Tiki and Ea, has Hine-titama, with whom he commits incest. Ea, says Best “was the first woman of this world” though he does not say from where she sprung. All this is to give a “general idea of the Maori idea of the origin of man and sex” (ibid., 207).

He then discusses “an unfortunate account of the origin of man which has appeared in print...undoubtedly the *result of missionary teaching* [mine]”, which he has not been able to corroborate from “reliable native sources”¹⁵⁰ (ibid.). This is important, as it shows him, in 1905, well aware of the possibility of syncretism in Maori religious thought, post-contact. This was the prime objection raised to the Io/Supreme Being theory: its Christian roots. It also points to him regarding some of his informants as being unimpeachable when it came to establishing such syncretisms - more an act of faith than proof. He moves on to the origin of death, and its connection with the female genitalia; then the tapu nature of “the organs of generation” for Maori. Magic practices were often accompanied by the placing of the hand on the genitals

in order to give force, supernatural power (*mana*) to his incantation. This is quite Oriental. Observe sundry passages in the Bible, where a man, when making a solemn promise, is said to have placed his hand ‘in the hollow of his thigh’ (ibid., 208).

This is another example of Best linking Māori practices to those of the Middle East.

What follows is a publication of material relating to Percy Smith’s Io hypothesis - a whakapapa from Io down to those who came in “the great migration *circa* 1350, and from them an average of 22 generations brings us down to the present time”(see insert, ibid., 210-211). Why Smith chose to

¹⁵⁰ There is no indication given in the article as to which account Best means. A search of the *JPS* and the *Transactions of the New Zealand Institute* in the 3-4 years immediately prior yielded nothing.

insert this material in the middle of an article on procreation is not clear - apart from a desire to announce his find to the world as soon as possible.¹⁵¹

His explanation follows:

We have lately come across a genealogical table - said to have been recited by the late Wahanui, principal chief of Ngati-Mania-poto - which illustrates in a very complete manner Mr Best's remarks on the successive generative ideas applied to chaos, and which moreover show at the head, or origin of it, the seldom-mentioned and exceedingly sacred god Io, as the origin of all things. This origin differs from Mr Best's, but it comes from a different tribe. We give this cosmological genealogy below, with the translation of the names of the Aeons preceding the birth of Heaven and Earth, who were the parents of the greater gods of Polynesia (ibid.).

Read in the context of Best's admission, earlier in this same article that he knew of Māori origin stories that resulted from "missionary teaching", this is a good example of the distance that existed between him and Smith at that point. Appearing as it does a good 2-3 years before Smith received the Whatahoro manuscripts from Downes, it shows him as a believer in waiting, with Best as yet uncommitted.¹⁵²

In Part II, published the following year, Best examines pregnancy, abortion, the *whare kahu* (foetus house) and the *whare kohanga* (nest house), birth marks, and the *tapu* of birth. In the course of this, he discusses an "ever increasing lack of fertility among women of the race" which was becoming, or became a truism in the discourse of fatal decline (Best, *JPS*, Vol XV, no. 57, Pt II, March 1906, 1 – 26). He observed this in compiling Tuhoe genealogies; there were a great number of couples, "many of them young people, to whom no children have been born" (ibid., 7). From this, he inferred that fertility rites he had just been describing "have lost their virtues in these days of the

¹⁵¹ In an earlier *JPS* article by the Rev T. G. Hammond on Atua Māori, which mentions Io (Vol VIII: 30, June, 1899), Smith footnotes that a good deal could be said about the Supreme God, but like the old Pākehā Māori, they should remain silent out of respect for their (native) teachers: "But *taihoa!* – EDITORS". In other words, sooner or later, they will publish. (90)

¹⁵² See Sorrenson, *Manifest Duty* (Sorrenson, 1992, 36-38).

pakeha". Going on to note the low birth rate amongst Tuhoe, he saw other reasons: the "changes wrought in social conditions, etc., by the advent and settlement of Europeans" (ibid.).

On the subject of sterility and the phenomenon of *whakapakoko* (images, nursing dolls, substitutes), Best took the opportunity to correct the notion amongst some European writers that these images "were looked upon as gods" and carried in order to promote conception. He aimed his criticism at Taylor's *Te Ika a Maui* in particular: in "that somewhat untrustworthy work", the author "speaks of them as household gods" carried to induce generation (ibid., 8-9). Writing of the "*tapu* of birth", Best said "the adoption of Christianity put an end to the rites described in this paper", due to the breakdown of the *tapu* system (ibid., 26). "It is a very modified form of *tapu* that we see now" – which again raises the question of how accurate a view he was able to gain of pre-Christian ritual, from those (presumably) caught up in the changes that transformed the Maori world.¹⁵³

Part III of the study covers the *tua* rite (*tapu* lifting from mother and child), the naming of children, the *tohi* rite, the *kawa ora*, *tu ora*, *tuapa* and *mauri* (Best, *JPS*, Vol XV, no. 59, Pt III, September 1906, 147 – 162). A note has been added by Smith to the text, on *tua karakia* repeated over male children (Best, 1906, 149). Best gave no translations of these incantations, but the editors have ventured "a transliteration of their apparent meaning", noting that "even the old men left alive cannot give the exact meaning to be expressed". As noted earlier, Best was discussing by mail with Smith this issue of translating *karakia*. In the section on naming, and *tapu* names, Best notes that a second, or *noa* name was sometimes given, but not retained, "for it is a native custom to change one's name when anything unusual occurs" (e.g., the death of a relative). He adds that when "Tuhoe built a house for Te Kooti at Te Whaiti,

¹⁵³ Tutakangahau, Best's oldest informant, was around the age of twelve in 1842, and recalled the missionary Colenso coming amongst Tuhoe. See Chapter 6.

for religious purposes, many of them adopted new names”¹⁵⁴ (ibid., 155-156). Best says the *tohi* rite was performed not only over newborns, but also throughout life; he instances the last case he personally was aware of having occurred in 1898, when

Seeing that much sickness was prevalent, a worthy old friend of mine performed the *tohi ora* over his two sons, that they might retain life, and escape the snare of Hine-nui-te-Po, goddess of Hades (ibid., 160).

This is almost certainly Tutakangahau, in the incident referred to earlier, when he prayed both to the Christian god and invoked Maori deities.¹⁵⁵

Speaking of the *kawa ora*, Best mentions the use by some Māori of the term *kawa* to mean “life principle”, and that the *kawa* of the Māori, being *tapu*, was “polluted by the customs, practices, etc.,” of the *noa* Europeans. This was held to be an explanation of Māori disappearing before the “invading white race” (ibid., 161). The *tu ora*, he writes, is another version of the *kawa ora*, performed over children at the *tuatanga* and at other times, e.g. when children die and leave surviving siblings. The *tu ora* was then performed to ensure the health and vigour of the survivors.

This *tu ora* was described to me by Tu-takanga-hau as: “*He uru ora, he whakawhiwhi i te hau ora, i nga toa i nga mahi, i nga mea katoa e tika ana ki te tamaiti*” – an endowing with health and the life principle, as also bravery, industry and all other desirable qualities (ibid., 161).

Tutakanagahau also stated that the *tu ora* was the same as the *tira ora* rite. In this, the *tohunga* invoked life and prosperity.

In Pt V of this series, Best notes his usual practice was gather his own material, almost exclusively from among Tuhoe. He makes an exception to quote from an article by Ihaia Hutana of Waipawa, “published in a native newspaper, ‘*Te Puke ki Hikurangi*’, now defunct” (Best, *JPS*, Vol XVI, no. 61,

¹⁵⁴ In a letter to Seddon, (24.9.1894) Tutakangahau’s son says he has changed his name. “Ki ahau taku ingoa i mua Te Oti Tutakangahau engari taku ingoa e karangatia ana inaianei ko Tukua Te Rangi Tutakanahau”. Archives NZ, J1, 1894/1424.

¹⁵⁵ See *JPS* Vol XVII, No 52, December 1904, “Maori Medical Lore”, Pt 1, p222.

March 1907, 1 – 12, 9). He seldom quotes from other writers, but says Hutana's piece contains "so many items in regard to birth, and the raising of children among the natives in former times" he has to insert it (*ibid.*, 9-11). Amongst other things, this shows Best was reading at least one of the Māori language newspapers - and therefore would have been in possession of a range of Māori opinions quite different to own. He ends this series with a very personal note on how he gathered his material firsthand "from the elderly people of the Tuhoe tribe" over the course of ten years. He speaks of nights spent in his tent, "of ceaseless interest, and ceaseless vigilance, on the part of the collector" to note and query the often vague allusions in songs and speeches. He wishes he could pass this passion for collecting onto his readers.

And if they be not rendered into the tongue of those who dwell within the white man's cities, in a manner most conventional, be not your hearts darkened thereby. *He manu hou ahau, he pi ka rere* (I am a new bird, a fledgling taking flight)¹⁵⁶ (*ibid.*, 12).

His idiosyncratic temperament is well-caught in this overheated language with its diction inversions and slightly messianic persona.¹⁵⁷ What strikes the reader here is Best's writing of his own identity: a dedicated ethnographer on the colonial frontier, enlightening his city-dwelling Pākehā brethren, who will nevertheless not truly understand the information, nor the price he paid to collect it. The whakatauāki reveals new kind of bird, a young bird on the wing, a new way of writing about Māori. Best, at this point in his career, was getting close to leaving the Urewera and his articles in the *Journal* begin to dry up. In 1908-1909, after the death of Tutakangahau and other old friends and informants, he published little before leaving the area, save for an article on "Māori Star Names" in June, 1910. Craig quotes him in 1909 as writing, "I am sick of the whole thing and prefer to get back to bush work and white men again" (Craig, 1964, 130). Best in fact was not such a young bird - he was in his mid-fifties, with no apparent job prospects beyond a return to bush work. The

¹⁵⁶ Implying that Best was a new kind of writer - perhaps learning his trade - and in some aspects, a different kind of New Zealander to his audience.

¹⁵⁷ C.f., Jesus in John's Gospel. "let not thy hearts be troubled..". (Ch. 14, v.1)

time of leaving, and the hiatus following on before he took up a post as Dominion Museum ethnologist in August 1910, slowed his submissions to the *JPS* until 1913. His focus had shifted at this point, from gathering material and publishing articles, to editing with a view to producing monographs and the major general works, *The Maori*, and *The Maori as he was*.

Newspaper Articles:

The final genre examined in this survey of Best's writing modes during the Urewera period will be his newspaper articles; journalism was a money-spinner hived off from his researches. In two early articles for the *Christchurch Press* (1897), he looks at the fate of Tuhoe and their present condition. A travelogue that describes a trip around Lake Waikaremoana with Tutakangahau domesticates inevitable extinction for his people. Their sacred lore is to be passed on to Best: Tuhoe are living in a "mist-laden past", about to be replaced by Pākehā in the working of the laws of "Human Progress". A metaphysical contest is conjured for the *Press's* readers: Tuhoe equipped with "sacred karakia and Neolithic weapons", facing the onwards marching Pākehā children of Progress. In the article on Tuhoe's present condition, he notes them adopting the money economy - shearing etc - and acknowledges that the search for the "noble savage" amongst them is vain. The new Māori is "a billiard-playing generation", given to adopting the worst of Pākehā ways. There are others who are imbued with all the old superstitious mentality, and slavishly follow the false prophet, Rua Kenana. There is no attempt made by Best to understand an indigenous, syncretistic religious movement on its own terms.

Best was first published as a journalist in the mid-1880s, and he remained prolific during the 1890s, up until 1910. There was much less newspaper work in his Dominion Museum years, as he concentrated on his books and articles in established journals, such as *The Journal of Science and Technology*, as well as the *JPS*. This was partly because Best had "arrived" as a Māori expert by this time, the pressure of his new duties, and to some extent, because his

earlier need for supplementary income was less pressing, due to a regular salary.¹⁵⁸ Writing to Percy Smith c.1895-96, Best mentions his journalism, in this case for the *Otago Witness*, as a “kind of recreation...generally written in bed or when out for a walk when I camp on a hill top”. He wrote for this paper from 1896-1898 (ATL, MS-Papers-0072-08). The columns were his literary apprenticeship, establishing his name and authority before a wider audience, and of course, providing extra money. These periodicals will be illustrated here by reference to the Christchurch *Press* (1897) and the *Canterbury Times* (1897-1912), his major outlet.

The Christchurch *Press* was and remains today a major South Island daily, originally modelled on *The Times* of England. Best recycled material for this paper that had also appeared in the *Canterbury Times*. The first of the two articles in question appeared in *The Press*, January 18, 1897, as “In Tuhoe Land” by Mr Elsdon Best. He wrote of recent history, the legendary fierceness of Tuhoe, the roading project and its tourist potential in the unspoilt wilderness. He included a long speech, attributed to “the old patriach” who had accompanied him on a trip around Waikaremoana. This was Tutakangahau, the journey resulting in the travel book, *Waikaremoana* (1897).¹⁵⁹ The article concludes with a rationale for the disappearance of “the ancient People” in a “racial contest” with Pākehā who tread “the open highway of Human Progress”.

Framed as a travelogue, the piece is laden with political assertions, enclosing the compressed account by Tutakangahau of a “Polynesian cosmogony” (Best, 1897, 5). The area is “generally known as the Urewera Country, but it is proposed to alter this name to that of Tuhoe Land”, he writes of the mapmakers who were completing topographical and trigonometrical surveys, along with a triangulation survey of the North Island. The area was undesirable for settlement, but its geography made it a perfect “permanent reserve for the Tuhoe tribe”, where their customs might be preserved “as far

¹⁵⁸ His salary of £200 per annum was hardly generous for a man of his age.

¹⁵⁹ Examined in detail in the following chapter.

as possible” in a form of Jurassic Park, attracting hordes of Pākehā tourists, who would come “and abide by the dead ashes of our camp fires at Waipaoa and Te Puna”.¹⁶⁰ The land had great interest for the geologist, the botanist, and the “general anthropologist and student of folk lore”.

Best puts on his ethnographer’s hat, and begins to compare Māori mythological systems with those of “occidental nations”. The ethnologist who collects

these legends of old from the descendants of Tuhoe-potiki, shall be startled by many resemblances to the weird folk stories of Teuton and Kelt, while the Polynesian cosmogony may have been taken from the clay tablets of Sargon of old.¹⁶¹

This is close to suggesting that Tuhoe may really be brown Anglo-Saxons, or at the very least Pacific relatives of old Abraham. While Best merely suggests a linkage here between Māori and Mesopotamia, the diffusionist implications are clear. Whoever Māori are, they are more like Pākehā than themselves. This ennoblement strategy functions as much to locate and cement European identity in the Pacific, as it does to place Māori ancestors in the “cradle of civilisation”.¹⁶² The recurrent use of analogues is symptomatic of the comparative model of anthropology.

Not only was Best dropping large hints that Māori religious views were ultimately derived from those that shaped the West, but in what follows he purports to quote oral legends “transmitted from generation to generation since the days of the Ancient People”. The reader gets no real warning that

¹⁶⁰ Refers to the trip he took with Tutakangahau around the lake.

¹⁶¹ Sargon of Akkad, ruler of ancient Mesopotamia, c.2334-2279 BC. He established the region’s first Semitic dynasty; Akkadian calligraphy and its detailed mythological records received fresh impetus during his long reign. See: http://history-world.org/sargon_the_great.htm

¹⁶² See Howe (2003): The basis of the modern academic view of Polynesian migration was laid by Cook and Forster 200 years ago, but their answers only spawned endless speculations, “which suggests that the real imperatives lay in the questioners’ concerns about themselves rather than the ostensible subject. That is, the question of Islanders’ origins became an ongoing vehicle for investigating the European past, present and future” (Howe, 2003, 36).

the paragraph beginning a creation history (which follows the quote above), is the voice of Tutakangahau, explaining Māori origins. This becomes obvious near the end of the article, where a voice says “Kati, we will now cease...”, and Best refers to “the old patriarch quoted above... who accompanied me across the Huiairau Mountains to the lakes...”¹⁶³ (ibid., 6). In very biblical phrasing, “Tutakangahau” speaks: “In the beginning were Rangi and Papa, or Heaven and Earth; but heaven lay prone upon the earth and there was no light, darkness brooded between them”. The transition is so seamless that the reader is at first unaware that Best has moved from his own voice to a form of reported speech. Those unfamiliar with the syncretistic forces at work in Māori spirituality, might have taken the similarity to the language and thought forms of Genesis 1:1-2 as another example of Best’s analogical speculations. If this was recorded as a genuine account of pre-European cosmogony, Best was not making the connection between the old man’s early exposure to the missionaries and the style of this kōrero. He may not have known in 1897, as he did by the time *Tuhoe* was completed ten years later, that Tutakangahau had seen Colenso in the 1840s.

This is a layered text, deserving of a more extensive study. The way Best presents what purports to be the old man’s thoughts in such antique language invites attention: “Rongo, the peaceful, who is the patron saint of cultivation”, and how “far across the lands of the Ancient people resounded the roar of the war drums”. This is of course journalism, but in the political climate of the day, it was also propaganda. Best places himself as the audience for the speech: “But to you, O! pakeha, who comes from the towns of the white men, to learn our *ancient* history and *sacred* lore of old - there are many, many things to tell” [italics mine]. Is this really the old man’s voice, pushing the deeds of his ancestors back into a misty past, metamorphosing eminently practical karakia into esoteric knowledge? Undoubtedly Tutakangahau shared a great deal with Best on their journey around the lake; but what the writer made of it, and the public who consumed these new mythologies, was

¹⁶³ See *Waikare-moana, The Sea of Rippling Waters*, pp 9-17. Best’s companion is “the Kaumatua”; the picture is of Tutakangahau. (Best, 1897 (1975), 12)

out of the old man's control control.¹⁶⁴ Much of it functioned to persuade Pākehā readers of an inevitable Māori decline to evolutionary oblivion. The ideology of extinction is reflected in the choice of language – the tropes of a late-Victorian romanticism.

Best cheerily announces in closing that this had been “the most enjoyable expedition” he had undertaken for many years, but his conclusion was grim. “The Children of the Mist shall be no more...for they are living in the mist-laden past, while the pakeha treads the open highway of Human Progress” (ibid.). Tutakangahau's function was to pass on the legends of his people to this strange Pākehā, who did not “despise [our] sacred knowledge as do many of your people”. The article closes with an old man's tangi (lament) for his fate:

But the camp fire is dying out, and as I lift the fly and pass into my lone tent an old time proverb of the Maori comes to me – “Moku ano enei ra, mo te ra e to ana, mo te rakao (sic) hinga.” “Leave me these few remaining days, for I am as the setting sun, I am as a falling tree.”¹⁶⁵

Best to some degree identified with his subjects: in assuming their departure from history, he perhaps sensed his own world closing down before the same “Human Progress” he lauded. As Lyndsay Head has observed, Best was “one of the old guard who spoke Māori. They had to make a mystique out of the past because it was going so fast” (Head, University of Canterbury, 1995, unpublished lecture notes).

In summary, the writing creates a stark contrast between the physical and the political: the rugged, isolated nature of “Tuhoe Land”, shrouded in tangible mist, soon to be opened up by a road which would become a “favourite route for many tourists”. It closes with the supposed backward-looking

¹⁶⁴ An example of Tutakangahau's written style and influences was seen earlier, where he discusses unifying whakapapa.

¹⁶⁵ This is a variant of a well-known proverb, but Best mistranslates it, to identify with the sun. Mead (2001) attributes it to an unidentified chief “reaching the end of his days” – referencing Best (*JPS*, 1901, Vol 10, 1-20) as his source (Mead & Grove, 2001, 301).

psychological state of Tuhoe, equipped only with “sacred karakia and neolithic weapons”, while the Pākehā were treading a future-oriented “open highway” of progress: the metaphysical contest here made manifest. Best used figurative language to disguise the fact that Tuhoe were being undermined by government force of arms and settler land hunger. These convictions were undoubtedly reinforced by what he saw around him, and to expect an objectivity that stood him outside the discourses of his day would be to swing the revisionist pendulum into a zone of naivety. The elegiac tone here echoes and reinforces the underlying evolutionary determinism discussed earlier.

The second *Press* article, “The Present Condition of the Urewera Tribe”, was a closer look at the situation Best found in the Urewera (March 22nd 1897, 5 – 6). It is a vital early statement, both in the views he expresses on cultural change amongst Tuhoe and their adoption of European ways, as well as its opening indictment of those who would search for the “noble savage” amongst Urewera Māori. He opens by noting an “Anglo-Saxon” tendency to seek for evidence of primitive peoples: how it was once thought that King Country Māori lived in “barbaric simplicity”, until the exploding of that theory led to a shift of curiosity to “the conservative sons of Toi”. Intent on disabusing his readers of that state of affairs – an outpost of primitive life in the colony – Best makes a startling statement: “the primitive Maori is a thing of the past”. How then did he hope to discover anything about them? Again, he insists, “those acquainted with the race know that not for many years have any of the Maori people lived in the old primitive manner” (ibid., 5).

As evidence, he documents the impact of modernity on Tuhoe, claiming the real situation he had observed (the mix-and-match of Māori and European clothing) would have been “too startling and repellent to those in search of the noble and poetic savage”! With a clear description of how Tuhoe had adopted European dress, even though “the encroaching pakeha” had little access to their territory, Best undermines any further romantic notions. He describes how the “young men of Tuhoe have for many years....[been]

migrating to Hawke's Bay and elsewhere, in order to obtain employment at sheep-shearing".¹⁶⁶ This involvement in the national economy, providing them with "saddles, shot guns and ammunition" shows that Tuhoe were not at all isolated from the changing culture around them, but were picking and choosing the elements that suited them. He goes on to concede that in matters of food, the people "closely follow the habits of their forefathers", yet the food staples he cites are exotic: potato, maize and pumpkins, and the other important crop, tobacco (smoking amongst Tuhoe receives a rebuke, especially the giving of the pipe to children). While the older men continued to hunt birds and fish in the old ways, the young were deserting snares for the shotgun.

What is remarkable here is that he was later to ignore these warnings issued to those in search of that noble and poetic "savage". While his language was to change, his own search for the metaphysical primitive was to prove little different. Terms such as "the kura huna", which abound in his letters to Smith, and the gradual construction of "the mythopoetic Maori" during his years in the Urewera show that the temptation was too strong for him, even in the face of evidence that the old world could not be reconstructed. This is apparent when he concedes that despite the outward adoption of European forms, a Māori sensibility prevailed, "the old feelings are still with them and remnants of ancient customs may be observed" (ibid.). Yet it is little more than remnants by this time (1897). While conceding that Tuhoe had adopted "just so much of our religion as suited them", and providing numerous examples of tapu observances in relation to food, these are clearly the domain of the older people, "superstitions" which he claimed were intermingled in

¹⁶⁶ See *Te Ao Hou* (August 1957: No 19; December 1957: No 21). Bob Tutaki, a shearer of 50 years experience wrote in August of Māori struggles to obtain fair conditions from Pākehā farmers. H. Roth responded in a December, letter: The N.Z.W.U. was distributing union material to Māori shearers in 1896 (when Best was writing). By 1909, the Gisborne and East Coast Shearer's Union had "mostly Maori members" and by 1914, from a total of 4093 members of the New Zealand Shearers Union, "1000 were Maori shearers" (51).

the minds of his Tuhoe informants with the belief that the tapu-less Pākehā was free to do anything with impunity, and this was a secret of his success.

What men like Best feared would happen – the loss of Māori knowledge with Māori lifeways – had already occurred. The real question was not so much what could be retrieved, but how might “ancient” information from men such as Whatu and Tutakangahau be disentangled from its modern influences? While recounting supposedly amusing anecdotes to demonstrate eccentricities thrown up by such cultural mingling, Best hints at the impossibility of obtaining pristine material. Seeing a picture of a camel in Best’s tent, Whatu asked him if that was the beast the “Scripture speaks of as passing through the eye of a needle?”. When Best assured him it was, “Swift and scathing was the reply, ‘E Tama! Katahi taku iwi rukahu, he pakeha!’ (Son, what humbugs the pakehas are!)” (ibid., 6). While this is recounted to demonstrate how “amusing” Māori can be, it also demonstrates the influence of Christianity, noted again in a sign above a store run by Tuhoe at Te Whaiti: “One bag flour 14 shillings, 1lb sugar 6d, 1 glass whiskey 1 shilling. ‘Come unto me all ye that are heavily laden and I will give you rest’”. Best mocks at this: “Comment is needless” - but makes it nevertheless: “Fancy the voluptuous 18 carat rest, that one would enjoy after a course of bush whiskey in a Maori pub!” (ibid.). The arrival of the Bible and alcohol amongst Tuhoe, along with guns, horses, and the money and ideas coming back into the Urewera with every returning shearer and farmhand - all attested to a vanished world. Best would be more dependent on imagination than on eyewitness accounts in order to reconstruct the world of the pre-European Māori from kōrero available to him in the Urewera. If the sign had indeed been penned by a Tuhoe storekeeper, the level of wit and irony displayed a sophisticated literary intellect that enjoyed a good joke.

Best wrote for his next major outlet, the *Canterbury Times*, from 1897 until 1915. The *Times* (July 1865-May 1917) was a weekly newspaper that contained not only news and advertising, but picture features, analysis of current events, book reviews, fiction – and for Best’s purposes, an occasional

contributor's section, where his pieces on Tuhoe appeared. There was a wide range of subject matter: the aim here is to analyse the principal concerns that emerge from the weightier pieces, especially a tendency to analyse and isolate the essential characteristics of a perceived Māori psyche.¹⁶⁷ The areas examined are an insistence on Māori authenticity residing in the past; that Māori are best defined in their religious practices; that they display features of primitive survivals (especially the old men) – from a plane of human development once shared by civilised observers like Best. He and his readers are no longer able to return to that earlier stage of cultural evolution.

Early articles are prone to contrast Māori of Best's era with those since departed: he cites Māori sources to back him up. "They are not Maori, but a kind of brown paper edition of the Pakeha...They are as I heard a great Maori once express it, a *whakatupuranga purei piriote* – a billiard-playing generation" (*CT*, September 16, 1897). This comes from an article entitled "The Last of the Maori, The Customs and Traditions of a Vanishing People". Rather than say customs and traditions are disappearing, it is Māori who are said to be vanishing, authentic Māori, not their children and grandchildren who have adopted Pākehā ways. Written at a time when extinction was still predicted for Māori, this nevertheless displays an underlying essentialist bias, reinforced by quotes purportedly from Māori sources (usually older men, it must be said – Best was not much disposed to the young, or, it seems, to women).

The old time Maori is out of place in this era of the *pakeha*....As old Tikitu of Ngati-Awa [said], 'Friend, I see before me the day when the Maori shall be no more...because we, the Maori people of New Zealand have lost the *mana* of our ancestors' (*ibid.*, 45).

The language is revealing: modernity is contrasted unfavourably with a false antiquity: "old Tikitu", "old Tutaka" and "the ancient people of New

¹⁶⁷ There are two columns that discuss his views on nature/Nature, solitude and the "primitive mind": these will be analysed in the following chapter.

Zealand" (*CT*, January 6, 1898, 49). Tutakangahau is quoted: "E heke ana ki te kore – we, the Maori people are drifting down to oblivion". The translation is Best's, sharpening the Māori, and cited in a context that discusses loss of tapu as the reason for their impending extinction (*ibid.*). Māori demoralisation is again linked to the loss of tapu, "the great sickness caused by our people accessing Christianity" (*CT*, January 20, 46). This comes from a story sourced to Te Whatu, concerning Hine-Ruarangi, turned into a kawau, seen by Te Kooti flying over the Whirinaki River. He is said to have prophesied that "the mana of the white men shall be over them, his lines (surveys) shall pierce the dark places of the land". It is not clear, of course, whether these are verbatim reports, Te Whatu's version, or Best's version of the story for public consumption. The jumbled provenance of this popular journalism is not the real issue: again, Best is defining what it means to be Māori in terms of religion, in a language using Pākehā tropes. Speaking of the roads that came in Tuhoe, Te Whatu is reported as saying, when "the first road...when the pakehas who rule the roads came", the men of Te Whaiti resisted "the great ocean which was rolling down the land". In spite of their European armoury, "weapons of the new people...the aitua (evil omen) was fulfilled and the road came" (*ibid.*).

Best had arrived amongst Tuhoe with the new roading project: note the way Te Kooti's prophecy has been deployed in the article to herald the fulfilment of Pākehā military superiority. Māori are noa, and Hine no longer warns Tuhoe "since our mana Maori was lost to us by the settling of the Pakeha on our lands" (*ibid.*). Māori beliefs are here turned against them, as a rationale for their inability to withstand progress, and Te Kooti is reduced in this context to a superstitious oracle, prophesying doom. "Progress is inevitable" is the underlying message, and Māori cannot resist because they are disempowered by superstition. What is missing from the account is the disparity in numbers and military technology: Best, a veteran of Parihaka, would have been well aware of Tuhoe's inability to resist long-term, but the implication here is that Māori resistance is a result of metaphysical, not

military displacements. The primitive must make way eventually for the engines of civilisation.

Kuper has observed that the use of the term “primitive” always implies a civilised binary – yet this argument needs deepening, in view of what will be seen in the following chapter on Best’s own shaky binaries (Kuper, 1988, 240). Best’s construction of the Māori psyche: “On the War Trail” (January 1, 1902, 55) discusses their military methods and behaviour in battle. He praises Māori courage, endurance and tenacity, but notes a warrior might panic or lose courage “from causes that would not affect a civilised person”. Europeans also panicked on the battlefield, but Māori, in retreat are portrayed here as qualitatively different. Best does not elaborate, but the implication seems to be that civilised men under arms operate under different cultural imperatives. In reading Best’s notes on the weaponry, he is far more authoritative and interesting when he concentrates on describing material aspects of culture – the route of historical particularism, which was to overtake social evolutionism in early 20th century anthropology.

The use of Aryan and Semitic analogues is another of the means employed to bring Māori into Western modes of understanding. “Religious Rites of the Maori: Sacred Fires”, appeared in the *Times* on September 3, 1902. Best opens this sketch by referring to “systems of sacred fires of the pre-Semitic peoples of Chaldea, and possibly to a lesser extent, those of the natives of Hindoostan, as observed in the works of Max Müller and others” (CT, 53). The reason Best raises the issue of Chaldea seems twofold. He is working from a diffusionist model of comparative anthropology, in which cultural advances are assumed to be borrowed from incoming, superior levels of human development, or carried from one originating site to an outlying situation by waves of migration: “to find anything of a like nature, we must go back”. In prefacing his discussion of Māori fire rituals, he situated them in a line of Semitic

inheritance. While this brief reference is not worked out here, it will emerge fully-fledged, in his later works.¹⁶⁸

Here he describes the *ahi taitai*, a ceremonial rite to ensure abundance and continuity of food production, and physical and spiritual health for the people and the land. He quickly shifts from describing the rite to analysing “the primitive mind”.

For above all things the Maori of old was metaphysical and sought the cause of things and their relation to himself. Searching along these lines, and ever groping into the darkling world of his primitive mind, he had evolved the belief in a singular and anagogic essence or ichor¹⁶⁹ which, according to his lights, pervades and vivifies all nature, man, land and matter (*ibid.*, 53).

Best notes that we have no equivalent term for this “because we have long passed the mental stage wherein the Maori sojourns yet”. So long in fact, that Europeans have forgotten what their primitive ancestors knew: “That is why we wot not of Maori religious ideas”. Europeans cannot understand “the Maori mind” because they have “entered a different plane of mentality. Never again shall we lift the dim erratic trails of the primordial mind” (*ibid.*).

This is standard cultural evolutionist thinking, where difference is ranked on a scheme of progressive development: “primitive” cultures are discovered and dominated by the “civilised” cultures of the colonisers. It is a building block for what will come later in his writing.¹⁷⁰ The mind of “primitive man” is so exoticised as to be completely other, a site on which to project a Eurocentric vision of primitive metaphysics. The “Maori of old was metaphysical” - a seeker handicapped by his essential primitivism, but a

¹⁶⁸ See for instance, *The Māori* (1924): “Our task is now to scan an old-world myth as preserved by the far-spread Polynesian race...(the) old, old concept of a long-continued struggle between the forces of Light and Darkness, the well-known myth of Persia and many other lands, reappears in the land of the Māori (Tane and Whiro)” (99).

¹⁶⁹ From the Greek – an ethereal fluid which flowed in the veins of the gods.

¹⁷⁰ See *Maori religion and mythology* (1924): “The evolution of all human culture is as a chain, and does not consist of disconnected or sporadic occurrences. ‘For one religion builds upon another,’ as Carpenter puts it.” (Best, 1924a, 13)

seeker nonetheless. The irony for Best is that his project invites the reader to believe that the conduct of Māori affairs is somehow explicable by reference to Old World analogues (Semitic, Aryan), not in and of itself. Only the Māori is capable of revealing himself, from a position inside his developmental plane – but according to this theory, he cannot communicate outside that frame of reference, as the primitive cannot aspire to the civilised level. The latter can understand the former from the outside, but is unable to penetrate this primeval mental darkness.

The question arises as to who is suffering the impediment: Best looking into the “inscrutable” Māori mind, or those he talks to amongst Māori being unable to communicate their ideas? If the latter is true, except for a superficial description of material conditions, Best is wasting his time, as Māori thought is not susceptible to any non-Māori analysis, any more than Western modes of thinking are accessible to Māori. By the time of this article’s appearance, Māori had for over eighty years progressively incorporated Western thought forms and economic modes into their cultural patterns (including literacy, cash trading, and new civil and religious formations). This suggests that it is the evolutionary analysis that is primitive (in the sense of crude) and inclined to mysticism. The real question is what impelled Best into such essentialist presuppositions, in light of the wider picture available to him in the various Māori situations he must have encountered over the course of a lifetime in the field? His theoretical underpinnings overrode his personal relationships with Māori, at least on the evidence of what he wrote. On the theoretical level, Best appears as a great intuitive artist or scientist, condemned to work with inferior, second-hand tools.

By 1905, Best was nearing ten years amongst Tuhoe. Recycling a *JPS* article, he writes a column of Māori attitudes to death and dying, in “The Lore of the Whare Potae, III”¹⁷¹ (*CT*, September 27, 1905, 65). He characterises Maori as

¹⁷¹ This coinage of the “lore” of various whare seems to begin with Best, and most famously, with Smith’s *The lore of the Whare-wananga* (Pts 1 & 2, 1913). It appears

fatalists, and “it is the fatalism of the Orient” they exhibit. They meet death “without betraying fear”, not striving “against the clutch of death as many more advanced peoples do” (*CT*, 65). He attributes this to a non-Christian worldview, with no fear of punishment after death, or hellfire. He sarcastically retorts that now missionary activity has provided the Māori “with such a place. Long may he enjoy it.” He again point outs that Māori social constraints were enforced by “the laws of tapu”, which “Occidental obtuseness cannot grasp, or even recognise” (*ibid.*). What has become clear by this time is his hatred of Western religion, yet an embrace of the religious impulse in Māori. Many of these public pronouncements were little more than Best’s prejudices and projections. “Oriental fatalism” was a commonplace, revealing as little about Māori as “Occidental obtuseness” might have done for Pākehā.

Best’s apparent need for Māori, in the wake of his own rejection of orthodox Victorian Christianity can be seen as a kind of spiritual anchorage. The Great War had not yet undermined imperial certainties, nor Modernism internalised as a commonplace human awareness of the sub-conscious. He did not have to question his place in the scheme of things, yet his loner psyche required human company. Best befriended Māori, as well as making them the subject of his life’s work. This appears to be both the product of a search for belonging, for an unorthodox belief system, as well as the practice of a local anthropology. It is always important to keep the child in mind when dealing with the man: Best grew up on the fringes of what little European civilisation Wellington possessed in the 1860s; Māori playmates from the pā at Porirua and the bush itself were his world until the age of eleven. He was never able to fully belong in either: anthropology gave him the rationale for being *with* Māori, while being Pākehā prevented him being *of* them.

this particular systematisation of Māori thought is their creation. White’s voluminous *Ancient History of the Maori* is organised on tribal lines.

The final piece examined here, “The Darkened Mind” (*CT*, July 4, 1906, 62), is noteworthy for its mocking, sarcastic tone, the cruelty and aggression displayed in the character assassination of the prophet Rua Kenana and his supporters, a general contempt for superstition, and sectarian prejudice towards Catholics. In short, all the worst aspects of Best’s peppery character surface. In this polemic, Best states his views on the equivalence of reason with civilisation, and superstition with primitivism. He combines this with a bitter attack on Rua, the details of which re-appear in *The Maori*, twenty years later¹⁷² (Best, 1924b, 127). He opens with an account of the reaction of some Tuhoe people from Te Whaiti, after he had “obtained from an informant some genealogical tables” and “old-time Maori lore, including divers magic spells inimical to human life”. Local Māori, he claims, feared he would use this knowledge and information to bewitch them. He satirises such superstitious fears by composing a mock business card announcing him as a “first grade Tuhoean Warlock”, hoping to do “some lucrative business...even among the cultured Aryans of the Steel Age” (*CT*, 62). Best is playing to a Pākehā gallery at Tuhoe’s expense. He writes of his recent conversations with an unidentified “new Messiah” – who we know was Rua Kenana.¹⁷³ Best is not impressed with Rua’s worldview, but concedes with some sarcasm “his primitive mentality [made] an interesting study” (*ibid.*). Best’s antipathy to charismatic religious leaders – in fact, to a range of authority figures – is well in evidence in what follows, and is a feature of his psychological makeup (he was something of an outsider himself, with his own stake in acquiring authority in his chosen field).

He characterises schismatic religious leaders as little more than charlatans, who should expect no mercy at the hands of the authorities. Dakota Sioux,

¹⁷² See description of Rua Kenana’s messianic activities amongst Tuhoe, in *The Maori* (127). Craig describes Best’s appointment to the newly formed Māori Council in the Urewera, and as a health inspector for the Māori Health Services in the Mataatua district (c.1904), at which time he came into contact with Rua (Craig, 1964, 116-122). Best calls Rua “my very worthy friend”, but derides his mission to free Māori from European domination as a “strange craze” giving rise to “absurd acts, beliefs, superstitions and prophecies”.

¹⁷³ On Rua and Best, see also (Sissons, 1991, 5) and (Webster, 1979, 148).

Doukhobors in Canada, Dowie, Worthington and Co., and the “Divine Piggot”¹⁷⁴ are of the same ilk:

But what is the difference? In the name of many true prophets, what or where is the difference between our Joe Smith or Sam Pighead, and the true and only prophets of Neolithic man (ibid.).

It is not simply with Kenana that Best has issue: “When is the Darkened Mind to give place to the Clear Mind?” When will reason replace religion, knowledge, ignorance, understanding, fear? This is Best as preacher of an imagined Enlightenment reason. It is also an example of his nostalgia: Rua’s folly is that he has ceased to be authentically Māori. In embracing a mongrelised version of the Christianity the ethnographer detested, Rua was misrepresenting the pristine Māori world. It may also be a jealous Best: that self-styled “Tuhoean Warlock”, condemning in Rua the competitor what he desired for himself.¹⁷⁵ The issue here is power over the hearts and minds of Tuhoē: while not a Pākehā Māori, Best certainly evidences a desire to belong, and to exercise his authority in the production of Māori identity.

There is a threatening note in these objections as well: a new messiah of “the Sioux of Pine Ridge Agency” who Best had seen two decades earlier (during his American sojourn) “did not flourish long, but died with great suddenness – of lead poisoning” (ibid.). He seems grimly amused that this leader’s attempt to expel the white man (recalling Rua’s promises to his followers) ended with his earthly career being “cut short by a 45.60, and many of his friends accompanied him on his departure”. The implication is clear regarding the way to deal with indigenous troublemakers - including “the

¹⁷⁴ Best gives a congerie of supposedly analogous religious movements and cult leaders: Dowie and Worthington were early Pentecostal preachers who actually visited New Zealand. The Doukhobours were a Russian Christian movement founded in the 18th century, many of whom migrated to Canada in the 1890s to escape persecution for their views, which included rejection of ecclesiastical and state authority. Best is clearly interested in the whole area of charismatic religion and schismatic sects.

¹⁷⁵ This was not the first Māori persona Best would adopt: see the following chapter on Best and Nature, where in an earlier CT column, he styles himself as “Te Mohoao”, a woodsman.

newest Messiah, who is a member of the Tuhoe tribe, and a gentleman of sinister character". Best seems unable to give credence to the phenomenon of Māori millennialism; that in spite his own antipathy to cults deriving from Biblical teachings, local prophets like Rua might arise for good reason. Rua's power base as a healer was also a threat to Western medicine, and Best's role as a Health Officer. There was some conflict here, as Craig observes of Best's debates with tohunga, in trying to introduce Western ideas of food hygiene and sanitary practice: "Best was aware that superstition, though interesting ethnologically, was dangerous sociologically", as he and his wife attempted to launch elementary medical programmes amongst Tuhoe women at Ruātoki (Craig, 1964, 119).

Best contended that Rua's followers believed the miracles and joined in with the movement not because they were disempowered and demoralised by the effects of land-loss and settler swamping, but because of their intrinsically superstitious cast of mind: "For his mind is the mind of a child, of primordial man, ever ready to place faith in alleged supernatural events – and persons" (ibid.). He could not accept that recourse to supernatural power was a viable option in the apparent absence of political alternatives (not all of Tuhoe joined Rua). The political nature of Rua's activities, disturbing to the new settler order, was not lost on him, or his fellow Europeans. This may go some way to explaining the writer's willingness to sanction the iron hand in response (Best had been a member of the Taranaki Armed Constabulary, and served the government's cause at Pungarehu and Parihaka, with no sympathy for Māori claims) (Craig, 1964, 25-27). Best continues his argument for the triumph of reason over superstition, giving examples from his recent experiences amongst Tuhoe of "Faith, Doubt, Superstition and the Clouded Mind" – all of which are heavily ironical.

The first example is of a follower of Rua, who after examining the contents of Best's camp, informs him that since the King of England will meet with Rua at Gisborne, at the end of June to arrange the repatriation "of all white peoples

from New Zealand”, then Best’s cooking-stove, washboard and potato peeler will be forfeit to him. Best cites this a “gilt-edged example of Faith”, and follows it with an example of “Faith and Commercial Instinct”. His visitor proposes a bet of his ten pounds against Best’s one hundred, that King Edward VII “will arrive at Gisborne before July 1, 1906” (*CT*, *ibid*). Best asks another local Māori if he follows Rua – but this person says he will only believe after the King’s arrival, the payment of the country’s debt, and the expulsion of the European settlers. Best characterises this as “Doubt and Caution”, or “having two strings to his bow”. As further evidence of this behaviour, he instances an elder who has lost a child, and in order to save the two survivors, prayed to the “European’s God”, while performing over them “the ancient pagan rite of Tira Ora”.¹⁷⁶

Having given examples of Māori superstition, he argues that Europeans are just as susceptible. Meeting a “good and fervent Christian”, he enquired of him the fate of unbaptised children: were they consigned to Hades and endless tortures? His informant agreed that was the case, which Best calls “superstition of a very rank kind. Or it was devil worship?” (*ibid.*). He ends with the story of a priest who explained to a Māori audience that Napoleon was not defeated at Waterloo by English military prowess, but because he had sinned against the Lord. Best notes that “he was not English” – presumably a French Catholic. This too may have been “an example of Clouded Mind. But perhaps it was only racial feeling” says Best. The priest cannot admit English superiority over his fellow countrymen, so attributes Napoleon’s defeat to his sinfulness: another example of superstition amongst civilised people.

His reasons for citing these examples – where both Māori and Pākehā are criticised for their inconsistencies, prejudices and venality – is to prove a case against religions that promote superstition over reason. Any form of faith is suspect, be it primitive, established Christian, or a recent cult - especially if

¹⁷⁶ Tutakangahau, as cited earlier.

messianic in character. The problem here is not whether Best is right or wrong (essentially a matter of conviction over proof, in any case) – but the effect of such a stance on the character and reliability of his research. Given that this material was written immediately prior to his initial discovery of Io and the Supreme Being thesis – a development which was to turn his rationality upside down – Best’s inability to resist speculative spiritual notions calls into question his impartiality in matters of religion and the analysis of the spiritual beliefs and practice he observed amongst Tuhoe. Nobody attempting to untangle the contemporary situation, in order to find methods of reconstructing a pre-European spirituality, could have afforded such prejudices.

Best was handicapped by his Pākehā world-view: see for instance his description of Rua Kenana’s messianic activities amongst Tuhoe, in *The Maori* Vol 1 (1924b, 127), based on his experiences at the time these articles were written.¹⁷⁷ Craig (1964, 116-122) describes Best’s appointment to the newly formed Māori Council in the Urewera, and as a health inspector for the Māori Health Services in the Mataatua district (c.1904), at which time he came into contact with Rua. Best calls Rua “my very worthy friend”, but derides his mission to free Māori from European domination as a “strange craze” giving rise to “absurd acts, beliefs, superstitions and prophecies”. He does not attempt to understand this indigenous, syncretistic religious movement in its own terms, but cites it as a footnote in a passage concerned with mythic personification and the Polynesian mind: “Myths may come into existence by means of a love of the marvellous, and during a long residence among natives I have observed the genesis of weird tales on several occasions” (Best, 1924b, 127). Closer to Māori than most of his Pākehā peers, Best’s proximity did not necessarily confer understanding. This appears to have little to do with Māori:

¹⁷⁷ See King, Michael, (2003), Judge F. R. Chapman, sentencing Rua in 1917. It may be ten years after these articles, but Best would say amen to this: “You have learned that the law has a long arm...and that in every corner of the great Empire to which we belong the King’s law can reach anyone who offends against him. That is the lesson your people should learn from this trial” (King, 2003, 221).

rather, it shows his own inability to understand religious minds and temperament.

Conclusion:

The chapter set out to analyse five overlapping issues recurring in these materials over the period of Best's residence in the Urewera: identity and belonging, Māori authenticity, esoterica and the Io concept, primitive survivals and Māori agency. In regard to literary agency, we see Best the Pākehā using Māori cultural materials to define and locate Māori *being* and along with this, glimpses of Māori using Pākehā cultural forms to do the same. Best and Smith employed whakapapa to locate Māori in a Western chronology; Tutakangahau and Rua used the biblical traditions of genealogy and prophecy to re-align that past with Christian modernity in resisting settler power. Best was virtually unique amongst Pākehā at this time, in speaking Māori, living amongst them and putting a value on Māori difference. However, due to his own shortcomings (lack of education, temperament, class hatred, anti-clericalism), he was to stunt such intuitions and render their *true* culture and being as something lost and mystical.

I have argued that Best needed Māori as a spiritual anchor for his own quest to fashion an indigenous identity. Locating Māori authenticity in the past, discovering an esoteric layer to their religious systems, applying an evolutionary taxonomy that cast them as primitive survivals: these analyses conferred agency on Pākehā to define Māori being. Best, as Te Peehi amongst Tuhoe, found an alternative mode of being, and a partial solution to an existential dilemma: where did he belong in that transient frontier society? Remaining in the Urewera was a life he could not sustain. Tuhoe, for their part, gave him respect as a cultural authority – but they did not *need his need*, and could not meet it. He seems to have tired of their history because it contained no revelation, no promise of esoteric knowledge such as might be found in the “kura huna”. Best attempted to separate Māori being from Māori

history, which was accessed through an anthropological model that located authentic being in the past. Producing and controlling such a mystical Māori culture allowed Best to “disappear from the world of light”, on a self-authenticating quest for the grail of hidden knowledge.

The “discovery” of Io is part of the same process: the transferral of agency to the Pākehā collectors, who conferred an esoteric layer onto Māori spirituality, while denying Christian influences on Māori intellectual life. Possessing and revealing secrets made Best a power broker in a society undergoing rapid change. His major weakness was an inability to hold a nuanced view of the Māori situation, due to his own political entanglement and personal needs. Best was able to graft Io onto the primitive high god theories of Lang, and fit this into standard evolutionist doctrines of progress and extinction. The theory that Māori were examples of primitive survivals exoticised them, as a convenient site to locate a localised description of neolithic society. At this distance, however, it is the analysis itself that seems primitive.

What is missing is any balance: the existence of Māori agency, and the wider meanings and problems of describing such two-way cultural traffic. We have seen that as Best was collecting and collating whakapapa, so too were Tutakangahau and other Māori leaders. They were using Māori materials to structure their own origins, history and religion. Tutakangahau did not want this material neglected or misused, simply to consolidate tribal identity, or legitimate land claims. He had come to view whakapapa through a biblical lens, as evidence of the primal unity of the first parents, Rangi and Papa, and was involved in hui to see to the unifying of these ancestral genealogies. Rua’s disengagement from that past, and his deployment of messianic Biblical interpretations that challenged the settler order, was of an altogether different realm. It was agency nevertheless, understood as such by Best, seen as a threat to both the overall mission of progress and Best’s vision of Māori authenticity. Tutakangahau’s late “defection” to Rua’s camp, which so annoyed the ethnographer, exemplifies the gulf between the present for Best, that same

moment for Māori, and the essential Māori being he was attempting to capture for posterity.

This survey of Best's Urewera writings over a fifteen-year period has attempted to clarify a number of phases and issues in his work. The letters display a romanticised search for hidden knowledge and a concentration on whakapapa as the key. The speculations in *Tuhoe* carry on with this journey into esoterica. Articles in the *JPS* re-imagine Māori knowledge and actualities, by examining them through Western conceptual models. The newspapers popularise the elements above, adding more biographical detail to sites of Best's personal prejudice. Best seems unable to conceive of Tuhoe (or Māori in general) as able to access the benefits of Western culture, while retaining what they could of their own civilisation. The concept of a Māori civil realm would have seemed oxymoronic to them. In a period of great social change, the possibility of Māori agency is not contemplated by the Pākehā experts. There is no admission of the power to discriminate and choose amongst polities, as implied in Māori citizenship rights under Article Three of the Treaty of Waitangi - not that it carried much weight in the 1890s, nor had Tuhoe ever signed.

Best was attempting to practice anthropology, not political science or sociology; nevertheless, he was aware of the pitfalls. Max Müller, one of his major literary mentors, had this to say:

Poor primitive man has had many things to suffer at the hands of the ethnologist, the linguist, the psychologist. He has been represented on one side as no better than the ape, on the other as a primeval and divinely inspired prophet. We must try and look upon him and to understand him as essentially the same as ourselves, only moving in different surroundings. (Müller, 1898, 187)

It is plain that Best did not regard Māori in this light, and in many respects, *his* shadow appears at the centre of his work, rather than a Tuhoe substance. Best is the chief mourner for a passing frontier world, where his own displacement is projected onto men like Tutakangahau, who in many respects

had confronted modernity more successfully than this Pākehā. Best appears as the seeker and co-founder of an embryonic religion, substituting a despised Christian inheritance in his developing embrace of a syncretised Māori theism. Best at this point in his career resembles an Essene keeper of the Tuhoë Dead Sea Scrolls. He was never able to fully belong in either world: anthropology gave him the rationale for being *with* Māori, yet being Pākehā prevented him from being truly *of* them.

Chapter 4. Best and Nature: the origins of a localised Romanticism in his popular writings.

Introduction:

This chapter concerns Best's popular writings on nature/Nature and will discuss the cultural sources of his Romanticism, its indigenisation, and effects on his views of Māori relationships to the wilderness. The method will be to provide a close reading of his popular writings on nature and solitude. It will examine various aspects of the way he views and deploys the natural world, especially as a site for "primitive" psychology, and the importance of a solitary relationship with the bush in order to access an essentialised Māori psyche, "the mental trails of primitive man" (*Canterbury Times*, October 22, 1902). This relationship of psyche to environment is a consistent theme, from the earliest article examined (1892), through to the later publications (1920). An assessment will be made of the influence on Best of the German Romantics, via Emerson and American Transcendentalism, British Romantics such as Wordsworth and Coleridge, and the German philologist, F. Max Müller. Best's contention that "the mythology of every tropical country was based on terror" (1892) is a starting point in examining his notions of the sublime. Best's views of nature - and Nature - were not intended to be kept to himself. Nature, as produced by culture, was represented, re-configured, commodified, and returned to its literate source. Culturally produced *a priori* views of Nature were taken into the Urewera by Best, and helped to shape his experience, both as a solitary individual, and as a Pākehā living amongst Tuhoe in their relationship to the natural world. His various renderings of this encounter, and the genre in which he relayed it to the outside world, provide the materials for this analysis. These consist of his more popular writings – travelogues and newspaper articles – rather than the more serious scholarship concerned with the nature of Māori culture. Nevertheless, they provide a number of pointers to influences that shaped his thinking and conditioned his approaches to Tuhoe in their environment.

It is impossible to remove cultural loadings from a word such as nature, and attempt a neutral definition; yet an attempt must be made to unpack Best's capitalised "Nature", even if it is anachronistic to compare this with a modern view of the natural world. A recent dictionary definition highlights this problem: "nature" is variously "the whole sum of things, forces, activities and laws constituting the physical universe; the sum of physical things and forces as distinct from human beings; the material universe regarded as distinct from the supernatural or from a creator" (Cassell, 1997, 970). These views of nature may or may not include humanity, but they are certainly distinct from spiritual influences, and there is an implied cultural blindness: that we moderns can speak of such an entity with objectivity, and that nature has an existence whether or not it is observed and described. We might assume that this nature existed while Best was inscribing his vision of Nature, yet we have no way of confidently asserting that what we see now existed then, under these other gazes. If Māori, as Orbell asserts,¹⁷⁸ did not see themselves as separate and opposed to the world they inhabited and instinctively personified its forces; and if Best - in his journey from a Culture that manufactured an oppositional Nature - struggled to negotiate the ontological breach between himself and Māori, how much more problematic is it today to grasp the nuances of their various relationships with a "nature" we seldom contact, enmeshed as we are in post-modern simulacra?

This chapter will also argue that Best envisions a localised, Pākehā identity consonant with Western progress, that displays its own level of civilisation by recording the vanishing, indigenous culture, and accesses Māori psychology by encountering the "primitive mind" in the wilderness bastion of Tuhoe. There is also a warning sounded by Best: Pākehā are not Māori, and civilised

¹⁷⁸ See Orbell and Moon, for comments on Māori, nature and culture: "...in traditional times, the Maori did not think in these terms, for they did not see their existence as something separate and opposed to the world around them" (Orbell & Moon, 1985, 215).

man is limited in his ability to relate to this lost, neolithic world. The European has evolved: he can now be at best, an anthropologist, at the least, a tourist. Best's nature writings are an amalgam of these extremes. This attempt to both understand and absorb Māori into Enlightenment narratives of progress differs from earlier missionary romances of inevitable racial dominion through colonisation and conversion, yet grows from a related soil.¹⁷⁹ Best's hatred of missionaries saw him moving away from the typologies of revealed religion into a religion of Nature, in its Romantic and Transcendentalist aspects.

This part of the study addresses conflicting elements in the man: as a child of the Enlightenment, he was a progressivist who believed that advancing scientific knowledge would destroy irrational superstitions. He was also a Romantic, a transcendentalist nature mystic, imbued with the thinking of Emerson. The tension here, in relation to man in Nature, is between a mono-cultural vision of evolutionary progress, and a reaction to bourgeois civilisation. The Romantic impulse appears to be in conflict with a scientific Enlightenment temper – but as will become clear, the situation for Best was more complex than such static binaries might imply. Situating Māori authenticity in the past, and in the wilderness, was a possible way of resolving this conflict. Preserving an idealised heroic age – in the spirit of scientific enquiry – validates an obsolescent past by what it may teach an evolving, enlightened future. Best could engage with his romantic attraction to past primitivism, in situ, amongst its last survivors, constructing himself as a seeker of scientific modes of knowledge. Yet Best, the seeker of the *kura huna*, was also as we shall see, Best the bushman – in the true sense of the term. He was a hardened sawmiller of many years experience, expert in a dangerous field not known for visionaries and scholars. This background however was the perfect training for the field-working anthropologist: the other side of this complex personality. This chapter will survey Best's recorded views of nature from 1892 until 1920. It will encompass the

¹⁷⁹ See Taylor (Taylor, 1872) and Buddle (Buddle, 1873).

opposition of Nature and Culture, the concept of blind nature as an evolutionary mechanism, and situate him as a model for the later “Man Alone” literary archetype.

The Influence of Romanticism:

Best had gradually developed a view of nature and primitive humanity's place therein – but how did he absorb this ideological framework? There are later instances where he cites Emerson and Oliver Wendell Holmes, and clearly, by this time, he has read Müller. Emerson was well known and widely read in mid-to-late nineteenth century New Zealand; it was what Emerson brought with him that influenced those like Best who had moved away from Christian orthodoxy, but had not fully rejected a spiritual view of man and the universe.¹⁸⁰ Not only was there a transcendentalist influence from the New World; English writers such as Coleridge and Wordsworth who Best also read were propagators of forms of German idealism.

Nature [Best citing Emerson] “is the organ through which the universal spirit speaks to the individual”¹⁸¹. Coleridge [writes Best] tells us how wonder preceded knowledge and understanding:-“All knowledge begins and ends with wonder, but the first wonder is the child of ignorance; the second wonder is the parent of adoration”¹⁸² (Best, 1920, 10).

¹⁸⁰ See also Colenso, *Transactions of the New Zealand Institute*, Vol 11, Miscellaneous, Article V: “Contributions towards a better Knowledge of the Maori Race”, by the Rev William Colenso (77-106). He characterises Māori as natural (yet fallen) Idealists – quoting amongst others, Kant (Critique of Pure Reason); Emerson (Essay on Art); Ruskin (The Moderns); also Cicero and Seneca (ancients).

¹⁸¹ “...the noblest ministry of nature is to stand as the apparition of God. It is the organ through which the universal spirit speaks to the individual, and strives to lead back the individual to it.” Emerson, R W, *Nature* (1836), in Cook (ed), *Ralph Waldo Emerson, Selected Prose and Poetry*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston (New York, 1963), 37.

¹⁸² Best is citing Coleridge's *Aids to Reflection* (1825). See, Coleridge Samuel Taylor, ed. Fenby (Edinburgh, 1905), 206.

From Kant and German romantic philosophy proceeded the arguments that “undermined [the] whole ancient system” of Greek classical philosophy by “the application of subjective perception”. This meant that “reason was ultimately subjective...[and] reality is what we perceive it to be” (Newton, 1996, 23-24). Innate knowledge was replaced by innate feeling, opening the way to a religion of intuitive response. It was principally through popular and ubiquitous writers like Emerson, however, that colonial societies such as New Zealand imbibed this developing syncretism of European, American and Hindu religious philosophy.

German romanticism, originating in pietism, had reacted against the Enlightenment’s culmination in the French Revolution: it constructed “a new idealistic and unified philosophy and culture” (ibid, 21). German translations of Indian texts (such as those of Bopp and Müller) introduced Hinduism into European thought, and later, the influence of Kant, Schopenhauer and Swedenborg made its way to the United States, through Americans educated at German universities, and so to men like Emerson.¹⁸³ The intellectually restless Unitarian minister could not confine himself to the Protestant orthodoxy of a narrow-minded, mercantile New England community. With a vision of nature’s intimate relationship with the human and the divine, he set out to fashion his own theology, publishing his first major work, *Nature* in 1836. Nature, according to Emerson (as cited by Best above) was the source of the universal spirit’s converse with the individual. The transcendentalist worshipper in the woods is seen thus, as “a transparent eyeball; I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part and parcel of God” (Emerson, 1963, 6). Looking ahead to Best, we will find echoes of the following when he discusses the origins of the Māori supreme being, Io, in their relationship with the natural world: “.... that behind nature...spirit is present...[and] that spirit, that is, the Supreme Being...puts [nature] forth through us” (ibid., 38). Theologically speaking, nature is no

¹⁸³ See Chapter 2 - in 1869, the Rev Charles Fraser mentions both Bopp and Müller in the *Transactions of the New Zealand Institute*, in arguing for the establishment of a New Zealand university (Fraser, 1869, 22).

longer the revelatory book of a creator God, corroborated by the Scriptures; it is evolving instead into what Newton has called “the infinite reference point of a self-projected absolute” (Newton, 1996, 27). This unorthodox deity will become the template for Best’s Io: a being above all others in the Māori pantheon, who has none of the Old Testament blood on his hands, nor does he resemble the incarnate New Testament blood sacrifice.

With its roots in ancient Christian heresies such as Socinianism and Pelagianism,¹⁸⁴ and consequent doctrinal dilution, Unitarianism had opened the door to Transcendentalism, out of which grew a Hindu-Buddhist influenced American Transcendentalist Orientalism, “a variant in American millennialism” (Versluis, 1993, 3). Combined with a belief in material and spiritual progress, and appropriating aspects of Asian religious traditions with no reference to belief in practice, the movement expressed both American eclecticism and material confidence. It encouraged the development of the relativistic view of religions: “Transcendentalism was an outright embracing of the very things that threatened or relativised orthodox Christianity in all sects: the dogma of ‘progress’, the new science, and comparative religion” (ibid., 8). There could hardly be a more succinct description of Best’s philosophical position. Best believed himself to be all of these: a scientist involved in the study of comparative religion and anthropology, as well as an inheritor of Western progress in the form of a rationalist, civilised modernity. The Emersonian influences that he absorbed to construct a Māori identity were a philosophical amalgam of East and West. He believed he could interpret the Māori psyche, and represent their true nature more accurately, and sympathetically than the missionaries. He borrowed from writers like Emerson an essentially religious view of nature, moving away from revealed religion and into Nature as the spiritual ground of being.

¹⁸⁴ Pelagius (354 – 420?) taught the heretical notion that divine grace was not solely necessary for salvation, which meant that the doctrine of original sin was in error. Socinus (1539 – 1604) was a major founder of an anti-trinitarian heresy which has some similarities to Unitarianism.

The irony of his religious antipathies becomes clearer when the roots of his thinking are examined more closely: the Transcendentalists were essentially religious thinkers, and their leading writers, priestly figures. The movement was as much inward as outward, away from reason and toward feeling; from philosophy to aesthetics, from the primacy of objective reality to the autonomy of inner, subjective processes. Man was to be the judge of what constituted God and creation (spirit and matter), not vice versa. Moral and cultural relativity are the logical outcomes and the artist and the scientist become the new priesthood, or truth seekers and tellers. Best exemplifies this transition in the deployment of his field researches to dethrone the missionary views of Māori culture and society. Best finds his religio-philosophical home in this American movement, which gave substance to his views on man in Nature, especially primitive man, and the remnants of such a mode of being amongst Māori in general and Tuhoe in particular.

Best's early relationship to the natural world:

It is important here to briefly reprise Best's background and circumstances: he was born in 1856 and grew up until the age of ten around Tawa and the Porirua area, when much of the land was still not cleared. He proved school-averse and is reported as preferring to play in the bush with his Māori mates (Craig, 1964, 11-17). A malcontent at school and the office, he found himself as a sixteen year old working on farms and sawmills in Poverty Bay. A working passage to the United States in the early 1880s saw him similarly employed in forestry camps. His return to New Zealand and his appointment as quartermaster on the Urewera road project in 1895 led him to a fifteen-year sojourn in the Urewera ranges. Apart from a brief spell in the Armed Constabulary, by 1910, when he left Tuhoe for the Dominion Museum, Best had spent most of his first fifty years living and working outside of towns, often in real isolation. Marrying late, he had lived a typical single man's life. As Michael King has noted, "a rich male culture grew up around the lives of such men...They laid down many of the unspoken conventions of New Zealand male culture in the twentieth and twenty-first century" (King, 2003,

229-230). Best preferred to keep urban civilisation at arms length, but was determined to earn its recognition.¹⁸⁵ He belonged to power, even although alienated from many of its bourgeois manifestations in the form of civilised comforts. He was a type of frontier intellectual, extinct today, who laboured for much of his adult life in dangerous bush work, while burning the midnight oil in a marathon feat of autodidactic endeavour that persisted almost to the gates of death. In understanding Best's relationship to Nature/nature, it is vital to grasp his lifelong attraction to and dependence on the bush as a way of life.

It is speculative to assume psychological links between his background and career choices with his literary output; but it is reasonable to suggest that these led him to his subject. In his travels to America (1883-1886), he worked in his accustomed areas (logging and sawmilling), but also learned Spanish. It was this knowledge that led him to read Spanish texts about the peoples of the Philippines, which led in turn to his first major scholarly article. In this early ethnographic piece, "The Races of the Philippines" (*JPS*, 1982), he raised the issue of environmental determinism in tropical environments. This has been discussed in Chapter 2, under the rubric of primitivism in the tropics, a concept Blaut dates back to Montesquieu in 1748 (Blaut, 1993, 69-80). Best claimed that "the mythology of every tropical country is based on terror", and those that lived in such climes were captive to natural forces (Best, 1892, 14). This could just as easily be Best's feelings, projected onto people he had never seen, or interviewed in their own tongue (his own criteria for the practice of ethnography). It was also a commonplace of the determinists, that superstition amongst savages prevented them from making intellectual and material advances, unless they first encountered superior ideas and technology introduced by explorers and conquerors from Europe (colonialist

¹⁸⁵ Best's early camps – and his later cottages, after his 1903 marriage to Adelaide Wylie – were similar to the missionary outposts of the early evangelists. Never a Pākehā-Māori, he kept himself apart, if not aloof, and was known for establishing gardens and planting fruit trees wherever he went. A Ruātoki kuia, Materoa Nikora, recalls playing in one of Best's old orchards as a child: they called it "te Ngahere-a-Peehi". Conversation with Materoa Nikora, August, 2004.

diffusion theory). Best amplified these ideas on primitivism, solitude and the maintenance of civilised values in his writings on nature, beginning with the travelogue, *Waikaremoana* (1897).

***Waikaremoana* : Romantic Nature and the transfer of Sacred Knowledge.**

Commissioned by the Hon. John McKenzie, then Minister of Lands, with a preface by S. Percy Smith, the Surveyor-General, Best's employer, mentor and colleague in the Polynesian Society, *Waikaremoana* was ostensibly a travel book and tourist guide "furnishing information to tourists as to various scenes of beauty on the lake" (Preface). The political context was the intent to open up the lake area by driving a road through, linking Rotorua with Napier, thus penetrating the mountainous territory of the "turbulent Tuhoe", with the underlying aim of pacification and control. This was to lead to the creation of the Urewera National Park (discussed in Chapter 6), which examines the history of Best's mentor and friend, the Tamakaimoana chief, Tutakangahau. Best was a quartermaster on the road, appointed by Smith with an underlying aim of accessing the vanishing knowledge of traditional Māori lifeways, held to exist most authentically amongst Tuhoe. Best the writer of travelogues is not the same as Best the scholar - yet this first publication is a rich guide to his attitudes at that time.

Tutakangahau is named as Best's principal guide and informant, styled as "the Kaumatua" by the author, who refers to himself as "the Pakeha". Such objectifying of himself and Tutakangahau creates an atmosphere of mystery: the two mythic figures set off as "the word [comes] to take the Ruatahuna trail

for Waikare-moana" (Best, 1897 (1975), 9). The Kaumatua is "yearning for his beloved mountain solitudes", while the Pakeha looks forward keenly to "snow-wrapped peaks and mighty ranges, the vast forest and rushing torrents, the lone lakes and great gulches" - commonplaces of romantic writing. What follows is not quite so mystical. The desire comes upon the writer, as it does "to all who truly love the face of mother Nature", to look upon

the unwrought wilderness and note the war which has been waged for untold centuries between it and primitive man – neolithic man, who has opened up the trails through the great forest he could not conquer – trails by which the incoming pioneers of the Age of Steel shall pass along, to leave behind peace in the place of war, thriving hamlets for stockaded pas, fields of waving grain for jungle and for forest (ibid.).

Best signals that while what follows may be a travel guide, the context is one of evolutionary struggle and colonial possession. Neolithic man, who failed to subdue the wilderness, merely blazed a trail for the Steel Age men to follow, and will be replaced. Pacification of the warring primitive will see economic progress take the place of mere subsistence. This is a philosophical and political statement: no contemporary travel book on the Urewera would set out such crude realities. Best dignifies the realpolitik of the 1890s with a cloak of evolutionary theory. Māori have been defeated, and sooner or later, the road and the tourists will symbolise their displacement and marginalisation. Prospects of a *sublime* nature and the *blind* nature of Spencerian evolutionism are woven subtly together: the beauty of vistas to come, natural and cultural. The farm will replace the forest, in the natural order of an evolutionary universe powered by engines of civilised progress.

The philosophical preface concludes with Best's pleasurable anticipation that the "ethnologist, botanist, and lover of primitive folk-lore" is about to experience "the glamour of the wilderness...and the *kura huna* – the

“concealed treasure” (of knowledge) – [that] loometh large in the Land of Tuhoe” (ibid.). There is the intimation of entering a time warp, and that collectible specimens, both botanic and human are available to the one who surrenders to the wild allure of the Urewera. The importance of this introduction is in the way it sets the tone. In some respects a training exercise for his later “*magnum opus*”, *Tuhoe* (1907), *Waikaremoana* is a fertile site of Best’s ideas about landscape, nature and culture. As Ian Wedde has argued, “landscape does not exist without representation” and when Best represents Nature and Waikaremoana to his readers, it is mediated through an intensive cultural filter (Wedde, 1995, 263). Representations of the Urewera involve first ‘orientalising’ a local guide, and figuring him as the “lineal descendant of the ancient race” who will guide Best and his readers to the “lone places of the land, there to observe the homes of the old time people” (Best, 1897, 11). So personified, the un-named Tutakangahau is ready to guide the reader into the text, if not the land.¹⁸⁶ The wilderness for the reader to discover will be, as Wedde asserts, a landscape “culturally produced: it has a history, or if you like, a mythology, which gives it a life in the present and a future” (Wedde, 1995, ibid.). *Waikaremoana* exemplifies the collapsing of categories that occurs when literate culture looks upon the “natural” world: nature *is* culture and culture is naturalised. By “literate” might be implied one trained in art as well as literature, or even literate in the grammar of surveying, road-making - outcomes of conquest.

The account proper opens as “the Pakeha sets forth by the new road being formed from old Fort Galatea...to Rua-tahuna, in the heart of Tuhoe land” (ibid.). The text will follow tracks that lead to mountain crossings, great lakes, rivers and streams, all to the accompaniment of tales told by the Kaumatua to the curious Pakeha. Legends intertwine with history, whakapapa, and campfire reminiscences of ancient – and recent – battles. Modern realities intrude: Tuhoe labourers shout a warning to the travellers, and “a huge mass

¹⁸⁶ Oddly enough, he is identified on p12, with his family, in a photograph taken by Best – yet not in the text itself.

of rock" hurtles down from a road-blasting explosion: they have "buried the war-axe and taken to pick and bar and shovel". This snapshot of Māori in the money economy might well destabilise the romance and the prior expressions of determinism, but Best is not deterred. The dense bush of the true wilderness is still to come, but wherever Tuhoe and their enemies have trod, "hill, gulch and streamlet" tell tales of war, "in token of 'the good old days'" (ibid., 14). A sardine tin by the roadside is a sign of "a changed and changing land", not elaborated upon: Tuhoe have gotten a taste for Pākehā fare, and are spending the money they have earned on other European delicacies and essentials. Ignoring the implications of the adoption of such civilised benefits (explosives and canned food), he presses on. As they leave the road and climb, Best becomes more lyrical: "Ranges, ranges, ranges! Bush covered, lone and silent...". The book's chief aim appears not to be representing nature's silent grandeur, however - rather, showcasing Best's access to the *kura huna* through the tales of "the Kaumatua".

The book unfolds in three main sections: crossing the Huiarau ranges, reaching Waikaremoana, and a central portion (49 - 83) where Best and Tutakangahau are left in a lakeside camp at Wai-o-paoa, while the other members return to Onepoto, perhaps for supplies. The writing of this interlude sees "the Kaumatua" setting out to enlighten "the Pakeha", that his dying traditions may be recorded and preserved in the world of light (see below) (ibid., 49). Onepoto is represented by Best as "the parts trodden by the white man": thus the "children" have returned to civilisation, leaving these two scholars "in the realm of Maahu, the lonest spot in lone Wairau"¹⁸⁷ (ibid., 48). Having passed Nga Makawe-o-Maahu (the hairs of his sacred head, overhanging flax), they had drifted "back into the remote past...and the *ao marama* (the world of light and being)"; another world (natural) becomes another time (metaphysical), which Best must visit to obtain his *kura huna*. The remainder of the book is a coda, a trek back from the lake to the Huiarau trail, the road, and a return to the Age of Steel. A short appendix gives a

¹⁸⁷ Maahu was an atua (god) whose son, Hau-mapuhia formed the great lake (41).

history of three Pākehā battles with Tuhoe: Te Kopani (1865), Herrick's expedition against Waikaremoana (1869), and the fall of Matuahū at the lake in the following year.

The outset of the journey seems conventional enough: a boat is provisioned and "the Kaumatua takes his seat in the stern, as becomes the guide and philosopher of the party", while the "Native boatmen seize their oars" and they row out from Onepoto (ibid., 32). Tutakangahau explains natural features and enlarges on their time-honoured meanings:

The *tohunga* (wise man, expert) of "*Mata-atua*",¹⁸⁸ as the Native crew have named our craft, now commences his arduous task of initiating us into the ancient lore of Waikare-moana. Thus the Kaumatua: 'The large, isolated rock you see at the point of Te Rahui is the ancient *whare pito tamariki*, or *takotoranga iho tamaraki*, a spot where the *iho* (umbilical cord) of new born children was placed as a *tohu whenua*.¹⁸⁹ ...And across the lake, where you see the hill Ngaheni, at Opu-ruahine, there lies the *iho* of Hōpa's brother, which preserves our *mana* over these lands (ibid., 33).

This section continues, describing natural features, and giving accounts of sacred places such as Te Waikotikoti o Maahu,¹⁹⁰ where rites such as the *tira* were performed (the cleansing of warriors before warfare) (ibid., 45). This part of the journey ends at Waiopaoa, where camp is made, and Best prepares to learn more of Maahu, "before it is too late. For the lands of Waikare are in a transition stage – the Maori has gone, though the Pakeha has not yet arrived; yet a little while and it will be too late" (ibid., 46).

Nature as a site for the transfer of Tuhoe knowledge:

¹⁸⁸ The name of the canoe on which Tuhoe ancestors arrived in Aotearoa.

¹⁸⁹ This was done to maintain tribal influence over certain lands, for succeeding generations.

¹⁹⁰ "The waters where Maahu's hair was cut".

After the natural wonders, and the signalling of Tuhoe's dispossession, the reader finds at the book's heart an extended meditation upon Waikaremoana's ancient history. What began as a journey into the wilderness becomes a form of *ōhāki* for a dying age.¹⁹¹ The forest ranges are peopled by memory; Best emphasises this in giving Tutakangahau a centrepiece speech. Sitting before the campfire, smoking their pipes, the "Kaumatua and the Pakeha are left alone in the realm of Maahu" (ibid., 48). In nature's remotest heart, Europe and the Pacific engage face-to-face,

alone in the great, silent expanse of Wairau-moana, the time has surely come to learn what is known of those who lived and fought and died in these mountain solitudes, long centuries before the white man dared adventure the great ocean of Kiwa (ibid.).

The natural setting of the lake's shore becomes a site for recounting primitive myth and traditions, ancient "tales of yore, the deeds of the god-like men of old, strange doings of monsters and semi-human creatures which lived in these weird places of the earth". It is a landscape of the romantic imagination, not a tourist guide. In recognition of the new political order, the account depicts the transfer of an oral Māori metaphysics to the paipera-bearing Pākehā.¹⁹² The passage that follows is Best's representation of this transfer into a written form of preservation - because the new generation of Tuhoe "have little love for the gallant stories of old" (ibid., 49).

Styled by Best as the "Oracle of the Rocky Mountains", Tutakangahau speaks.¹⁹³ He has followed Best to this lonely place to tell him of the legend of "the Sea of Rippling Waters"; Best should not be alarmed at the monsters which inhabit the lake, "for I am an *ariki taniwha*", the old man claims,

¹⁹¹ *Ōhāki*: a dying speech, made when a leader is passing on to death, and bequeaths his blessing, instructions, and challenges to his successor and his people.

¹⁹² See note six, Chapter 3, where paipera (bible) was used to describe the whakapapa books Best's informants used to write down information on genealogies etc.

¹⁹³ Best footnotes, "Rocky Mountain, Maunga-pohatu, the Kaumatua's ancestral home" (48). Quotes from this section are as if reported speech, i.e., Best giving an account of what Tutakangahau actually said to him.

descended from taniwha ancestors.¹⁹⁴ Because of Tutakangahau's powers, no taniwha will dare molest Best, but he is warned to be "strenuous in retaining what I impart, for I know that you have not eaten of the sacred herb which binds knowledge acquired" (ibid., 48-49). The transfer of knowledge, and power ensues: the old man tells Best he is to be the recipient of the ancient stories, traditions and customs. Tutakangahau's children are said to have little interest. He will tell them to Best, so the Pākehā can preserve them through the written record, "that they may be retained in the world of light".¹⁹⁵ Best is to become the transmitter of Tuhoe knowledge:

And do you write them plainly in your *paipera*, that all who love such things may yet understand, for I would hope that my children may yet return to the *kura* of Tuhoe and Potiki and be proud of the achievement of their ancestors. *Tena!* (ibid.).

The style of this kōrero, as relayed by Best, captures a complex moment where magic supposedly meets science: an ancient ariki taniwha in conversation with a modern ethnographer. Best is in charge of the account, so the reader must take him at his word: a portion of Tuhoe oral tradition is handed over to Pākehā literary preservation.¹⁹⁶

Best at this point had known Tutakangahau for little more than a year, the trip to the lake occurring sometime after June, 1896. On the 29th of that month, Tutakangahau had written to Seddon that he was about to go to Waikaremoana, at Best's request: "Kua noho au i runga i te whakahau mo matau ko pehi ma kia haere ki wai kare moana" (I am under orders to remain

¹⁹⁴ Best translates this as "Lord of Dragons".

¹⁹⁵ "Te ao marama - the world of light", the world of men, humanity, as opposed to the spiritual world, "te po", the world of darkness.

¹⁹⁶ Best indicates at the end of the account that some of his conversations with Tutakangahau were recorded on early Edison cylinders, "conserved in the mysterious phonographs" (83). See Craig, picture facing p129 (Craig, 1964, 129). Mervyn McLean has indicated that a number of decomposed cylinders were destroyed at the old Colonial Museum; no trace of those Best mentions remains (personal correspondence, email, 2004).

with Best and others, to go to (Lake) Waikaremoana).¹⁹⁷ In a letter to Percy Smith, dated the same day, he sends a bill in advance, asking the Surveyor General for a payment of five pounds for the service – among others - about to be rendered: “Whakahau ki a maua ko Tepehi kia haere maua ki Wai Kare Moana. E hoa me hoatu e koe te moni. I whakaturia mai koe e £5 pauna. Hoatu ki a Tukua terangi hai oranga mona”.¹⁹⁸ Tukua-te-rangi was Tutakangahau’s son, and the request is for the money to be paid to him. At the moment Best characterises the exchange of information as a mystical handover of ancient Tuhoe oral traditions to him, as a representative of Western literacy, his ariki taniwha is writing to the government with a bill for services rendered.¹⁹⁹ This exemplifies the need for a closer examination of Tutakangahau’s career than might be garnered from Best alone (see Chapter 6).

What Best describes no doubt occurred in some form, as laid down, but it is important to remember that Tutakangahau’s engagement with the emerging settler polity was long-lived and various. The impression that he is about to entrust Best with the kura huna of Tuhoe tradition reads a little like a form of magic realism. This occurs at the beginning of Best’s mature career, when despite having attained a remarkable fluency in Māori, he had as yet published little and did not have the status achieved by the end of the Urewera years. Tutakangahau hardly knew him, yet is portrayed as a man willing to divulge traditional information for posterity. He had undoubtedly assessed Best’s unusual linguistic abilities (at a time when most frontier Pākehā administrators could converse in Māori with some facility), and perceived his unusual degree of interest in the pre-European Māori world. This was an encounter between two ruānuku (wise men): Best was a little younger, but in intellectual matters these men were peers, and the longevity of their relationship (Tutakangahau died in 1907) bears testimony to the initial attraction. Best belonged to Pākehā power, and the old man wanted to access

¹⁹⁷ Letter, NA, J96/1082. “pehi/Pehi” or “Tepehi” are transliterations of “Best”.

¹⁹⁸ Letter, Urewera Surveys, LS-1, 21734, pt 2 of 2.

¹⁹⁹ I am indebted to Judith Binney, via Geoff Park, for this reference.

his influence; Tutakangahau possessed knowledge and authority, both of which the ethnographer needed to complete his mission.

There follows a thirty-page account of the “ancient people of Waikaremoana”, their legends and wars. With some editorial notes (from Best and Percy Smith), this is presented as authentically rendered from the lips of the older man. Best introduces each of Tutakangahau’s *kōrero* on the legends, the only guide to this being the alternating styles: there are no quotes for reported speech, the reader having to rely change of register to establish if Best is speaking, or reporting Tutakangahau’s comments, with occasional elements of direct speech.²⁰⁰ This continues until page 70, where a section on the wars of Ngati-Ruapani and Tuhoe, and Mohaka’s raid concludes the fireside revelations: “The gleaming camp-fire has burned low down...as the Kaumatua ends his long speech anent the days of old” (ibid., 83). Best’s voice predominates as he rewrites the dictation; there are a number of seamless “quotes”, giving the writing a strange, heterogenous texture. “Peace was once more established between these tribes by the raising of the *tatau pounamu**,²⁰¹ the ‘jade door’ which closes on war and strife” (ibid., 73). Plainly this is Best speaking; then shortly after, what seems like a quote: “As for Kahu-ngunu, *kua haere peke wha ratou* (they had gone off on all fours)” (ibid., 83). At one moment, we seem to hear Best, at another, the voice of Tutakangahau. There is no certainty as to what the informant said, what Best brought into the exchange, how it was edited, and therefore, how close it may be to a genuine recording of “ancient customs”, as promised earlier.

The remainder of the account tracks the journey back to civilisation; with descriptions of flora, fauna, people and places, it reverts to a more

²⁰⁰ See, for instance pp 50-52 (T), pp 52-53 (EB).

²⁰¹ Best elaborates in this footnote on the explanation of *tatau pounamu* which closes this sentence: an expression peculiar to the “Tahoe people (sic)”, denoting “a formal and enduring peace” (Best. 1897, 73).

conventional Victorian travel diary. As they paddle past Pa Pouaru and Te Waiwai, the outside world is called up by Best, when

The Kaumatua breaks forth into a *tangi* for the ancient homes of his tribe...then he descends to the practical, nineteenth-century view of matters, as he says, 'Should it happen that forts of Whakaari and Puke-huia were to be at war with each other now...the men...would be able to fight without leaving the pas, for a bullet will travel a hundred miles – or is it a hundred yards? (ibid., 91-92).

The past and the present intersect with this reminder of the potential for social change inherent in European technology, and of the other world at the journey's end. Lamenting the empty villages, Tutakangahau is again presented as yesterday's man, "drifting back over the stormy sea of his adventurous life" - a life having twelve years of political and social engagement to run. Crossing Huiarau, "the Kaumatua and the Pakeha take their last look at Waikare-whanaunga-kore,²⁰² and turning to the gleaming *kura* (red light), go downward through the snows..."(ibid., 102).

Waikaremoana is a very mixed bag: part travel book, part romance, it is important as a signpost to Best's later work, as a statement of intent. Insofar as it treats of nature, it does so in the main to locate Tuhoe primitivism in a past order, and what we learn of the lake and its environs is conditioned by this underlying strategy. The narrative movement is nevertheless strong, and a clear picture emerges of the interwoven nature of Tuhoe history, belief and practice, within the natural environment. The centrepiece, where Tutakangahau apparently anoints Best as a bearer of Tuhoe sacred lore, is an early exercise in ethnography, framed in the language of folk lore studies, placing whatever the old man told Best firmly in a European literary genre.

²⁰² "Waikaremoana without relatives": see footnote on p30, "so called because its winds and waves are no respecters of persons", that is, many canoes were swamped and paddlers drowned in storms on this inland sea. See also Mead and Groves, note 2632 (Mead & Grove, 2001, 420).

Even as a transitional piece of “Maoriland” writing,²⁰³ it points to what Best will later achieve in his more serious, scholarly work. As a result of the way in which Best has “digested” the old man’s comments, it becomes almost impossible at times to disengage Best from Tutakangahau’s kōrero. The relationship of an unspoiled, pristine Nature to an advancing displacement Culture – and the question of who should control these material and ideal realms – is prefigured in this text. It is taken up again in the next piece under consideration, a newspaper article also entitled, “Waikaremoana. The Sea of Rippling Waters”.

Aspects of Nature in Best’s journalism:

We have earlier seen Best recycling material in differing genres for alternative venues, converting his researches into popular journalism to add to his income and gain exposure. Like most New Zealand writers of the time, he was a part-timer with a day job, who learned to maximise opportunities. The article considered next was published in the *Canterbury Times*, five years after the previous book (July 9, 1902, p56). It was part of a lengthy series of articles, “From Tuhoeland”, which ran from approximately 1897 to 1906, where Best addressed the public interest in Māori life, covering a wide range of topics from agriculture to spiritual beliefs. Further articles on other Māori topics continued in the paper until 1914. Some of these columns described Tuho material culture; others such as this one were more speculative and ideological. It takes the form of a romance of Progress, couched in antique language, again referring to an unnamed “old guide” who points out the sites of “old combats” – Tutakangahau. The romanticised language stresses the comparative antiquity of “Tuhoeland”, where the original Maruiwi would have seen the ancestors of modern Māori make landfall at Whakatane “about

²⁰³ See eg, *The King country: or, Explorations in New Zealand; a narrative of 600 miles of travel through Maoriland* by Kerry-Nicholl, 1884; *Musings in Maoriland* by Bracken, Thomas, 1890.

the time of the battle of Cressy". Then follow descriptions of combats in medieval settings, fairy figures and "wood elves...driven away by the invading pakeha" (ibid., 55).

The setting moves on from "Neolithic strongholds" to "fighting in the sixties" – from prehistory to history, the oral to the written.²⁰⁴ "Nature" in this encounter is a corrective to the cosy attractions of civilisation with its dulling of the senses through creature comforts. Where one stayed and how one travelled on the lake dictated access to an earthly transcendence, and to the old time stories. Best extols the charms of the wilderness, insisting that those who want to see "the glories of the Earth Mother" must camp on the "shores and islets". More timid souls who prefer "to camp at a pakeha house away yonder" will only get "a 5 by 3 view of the Rippling Sea, and have to wear a collar anything under six inches. Hei aha!" This is a succinct formulation of one romantic proposition that too much civilisation chains and restricts human freedom: to encounter unmediated nature is to engage in an act of psychic liberation. This is not possible in the "pakeha house", or in "the fire-boat" (steamer) of the white man.²⁰⁵ As there are no Māori travelling on that craft, "you will not hear the sagas of old on board, nor will you know the men of old". Access to a shrouded past is denied unless one is in contact - as Best was - with its guardians.

The tension between a transcendental experience of primitive nature, primitive culture, its guardians, and their imminent disappearance arises later in the piece. Development (symbolised by the road, which Best is overseeing) will eventually sweep away these guides:

His roads (the European) pierce the rugged cliff sides, his white tents are seen in the dark places of the land. The booming of dynamite resounds

²⁰⁴ The term "prehistory" had been coined by the British archaeologist, Daniel Wilson, in 1851; "Neolithic" or New Stone Age" came from Swiss archaeology, refining Thomsen's Three Age system (Erickson, 1998, 56-58).

²⁰⁵ I can see no evidence here whether Māori used this term, or whether it was Best's coinage.

across the sounding waters in place of the warhorns of the men of old... Fewer and fewer still become the tattooed relics of a former people. Yet a little while and nothing shall remain of them save the drifting waters of Waikare.

A narrative of the primitive past is overtaken by the romance of progress. Best does not appear here to be an extreme extinctionist in relation to Māori, yet five years earlier in the Christchurch *Press*, he had made the point more strongly.²⁰⁶

For the pakeha is here, the far-reaching white man, who hungers for the great earth and before whom the sons of Maui must surely perish. And the sacred karakia and Neolithic weapons of my friends of Tuhoe Land shall not avail them in the *racial contest* (italics mine), for they are living in the mist-laden past, while the pakeha treads the open highway of Human Progress (Best, 1897, 6).

The Spencerian implications are clear: whether Best is speaking as an elegist for prehistoric Māori culture, or as an apologist for such a progress, the outcome will be the same. As Berman has noted of this thinking, two radically different historical moments had come together at the opening of the nineteenth century:

A great spiritual and cultural ideal (*romanticism*) is merging into an emerging material and social reality (*industrial modernity*). The romantic quest for self-development...is working itself out through a new form of romance, through the titanic work of economic development (Berman, 1983, 62, italic inserts mine).

The Nature his readers encountered in the earlier Waikaremoana excursion has altered; now the lake is portrayed with its Māori presences receding as the Pākehā progress continues. What is hinted at in certain passages in the earlier work is far more explicit here. These views would have coincided with those of the majority of his newspaper audience, and do not necessarily indicate a change in convictions. He is illustrating commonplace extinctionist assumptions. His next meditation on solitude and the wilderness advances a

²⁰⁶ Best's pessimism increased as he got older. See ATL, Comparative Anthropology. (MS-Papers-0072-33).

more intimate view of his relationship with nature – and of the place of Māori therein.

Best on Solitude:

“On Solitude and the Primitive Mind” was published three months later in the *Canterbury Times* (October 22, 1902). It is valuable as a public statement of his transcendentalist views, and for the way he portrays himself as priestly mediator between the forest gods of Māori and his Pākehā audience. Best employs the pseudonym, “Te Mohoao”, or a man of the woods, a barbarian; given what follows, it is most likely tongue-in-cheek.²⁰⁷ Best begins to compare the situation of his imagined readers with his: they in their urban comforts, he on his own in the heart of the “great forest ranges”, seventy miles from a township. He is reading the “colonial edition” of the English art critic Hamerton’s *Intellectual Life* (1879), meditating on the difference between solitude and loneliness, sparked by the writer’s observation on page 324: “Woe unto him that is never alone, and cannot bear to be alone”.²⁰⁸

Best’s discussion centres on a “type of man” suited to solitude, who “Nature has claimed”, who responds to her call. He is “admitted to the high places of the forest gods”, a form of priest and mediator:

For his work is there, the labour imposed on him by the love of the wondrous forces which we term Nature. [...] And his work shall be to interpret the ways of those gods and of their offspring, to enter into the

²⁰⁷ Williams gives *mohowao*, *mohoao* as “1. a. *Wild, uncouth*. Ngati maru mohoao nui. 2. *Strange, unaccustomed*. E tia, he mohoao koe ki te whare. 3. *Man of the woods, barbarian*. Kaore he kupu a te mohoao (N.117) (Williams, 1997 (1844, 1917), 206). Best seems to be applying the word in the third sense, a man of the woods, yet hardly a barbarian. See Grey, *Ngā Mahi a ngā Tūpuna*, where Maru-tuahū says to his father, Hotu-nui, “this is not the word of a woodsman/barbarian” (Grey, 1971, 117).

²⁰⁸ See *Maori religion and mythology*, where Best later cites *The Intellectual Life*, on the subject of intellectual religion and intellectual morality (Hamerton, 1978, 10). Hamerton was familiar with the Transcendentalists – see his essay, “Transcendentalism in Painting”, in *Thoughts About Art* (1873): “Kant used the word to designate the class of ideas existing in the human mind independently of experience. Emerson calls all people who rely on their own intuitions rather than the experiences of others, Transcendentalists” (Hamerton, 1873, 80ff).

manifestations of Nature, to explore and understand her realm, to find the silent, deserted, tenantless forest teeming with life, and calling to him in its own way and in its own tongue (Best, 1902, 53).

This pseudo-biblical imagery of the prophet's call is remarkably similar in tone to Emerson's prescription for the ideal Transcendentalist (in his essay of the same name) - especially when Best adds the following, "For the glamour of the forest is upon him. Never again will he list to the call of the haunts of man, but the gulf between them shall widen in the changing years. And of ten persons whom he meets, nine of them shall point the finger at him and say – this man is a fool".

Best had read Emerson by the early 1920s, if not when this article appeared (1902). It is more than likely - given the American philosopher's literary ubiquity - that Best's language, and his conception of Nature, are derivative. In *The Transcendentalist* (1843), Emerson had outlined a manifesto for the intuitive idealist, unfettered by material existence and earthly concerns:

It is a sign of our times, conspicuous to the coarsest observer, that many intelligent and religious persons withdraw themselves from the common labours and competitions of the market and the caucus, and betake themselves to a certain solitary and critical way of living, from which no solid fruit has appeared to justify their separation. They hold themselves aloof: they feel the disproportion between their faculties and the work offered them...and they consent to such labor as is open to them, though to their lofty dream the writings of Iliads or Hamlets, or the building of cities or empires seems drudgery (Emerson, 1981, 99).

Best again: "But he will go on his way, silent and reserved, for after all, his friends are many...The glamour of the forest is upon him" (Best, *ibid.*, 53). This prototypical Man Alone image is vintage Emerson:

They are the lonely; the spirit of their writing and conversation is lonely; they repel influences; they shun general society; they incline to shut themselves in their chamber in the house, to live in the country rather than the town, and to find their tasks and amusements in solitude (*ibid.*, 100).

Best seems disposed to a measure of the misanthropy offered by the frontier, but an intellectual climate existed that reinforced this, as his citing of Hamerton makes clear.

This Man-of-Nature, typically an outsider, a visionary, is what both Emerson and Best separately conjure: an stranger to the world of human affairs, at home in a Nature theorised through a transcendentalism rejecting the Christian God, but not the impulse to worship. This is antithetical to the way Māori experienced the natural world, and helps to explain why in this populist vision, Māori do not emerge from their own world on their own terms, but from Best's world, on his. Nature for Māori - however it was experienced - was gradually absorbed into Western cultural paradigms. The old nature-bound culture of traditional Māori society lost its coherence in the face of settlement and colonisation: economically, militarily and intellectually under the huge impact of literacy. Orbell has stressed the importance of a Māori kinship with nature exemplified by the tendency to "personify all aspects of the environment" (Orbell & Moon, 1985, 216-217). She characterises this as a fellow-feeling "for the life forms and other entities that surrounded them" (ibid.). While stressing this kinship, she does not elaborate it into some kind of overriding metaphysical system deriving from a "primitive mentality", as does Best.

Best combined a romantic vision of the wilderness and his own relationship to it with the comparison of primitive man and *his* relationship to Nature, uniting transcendentalist metaphysics with an evolutionary schema. Primitivism appears for him as the bedrock of the imagination, and the imagination is his link to atavistic impulses.

To the imaginative mind, as of primitive man, or the thinking man who is enamoured of Nature, the forest contains great possibilities. Primitive man peoples it with strange creatures, demons, elves and fairies, creatures not of this world, but who represent the gods of old, and who

shun man and his abodes. Observe the folk-lore of the Maori (Best, *ibid.*, 53).

He moves on to discuss Māori attitudes to the bush, and the tapu inherent “in the forest itself”. He asserts a series of equivalences: that the imagination (we assume, civilised) is structurally linked to primitive thought, as is the intellect of someone who loves “Nature”. For Best, called to interpret nature’s mysteries, there opens up the possibility of understanding and even identifying with such primitives, while at the same time *remaining on the plane of civilisation*. In a sense, Best is not looking at Māori as Māori, but as pointers to a way Pākehā can experience their evolutionary inheritance.

If Best is never alone in “the tenantless forest, teeming with life”, neither are Māori, who are “ever surrounded with life, the trees and the forest folk are his kindred.” Such kinship has its limits: “We note that Natives do not like to live alone, that they do not bear solitude so well as the white bushman...”. This is not because the bush is devoid of company, inducing loneliness, but rather, it is “too lively. He is surrounded by sentient beings, demons, sprites of the dead, etc., that the strain is too much for him”. The difference, he suggests, lies between a literate solitude, a chosen and self-conscious European relationship to “the wilderness”, and that of Tuhoe society in transition from an animistic orality. There remained a zone where the boundary between self-and-group and self-and-gods had not been fully transfigured from a unitary experience, the spiritual terror of an awe-filled *being*, into the relative detachment and objectivity offered by texts. The Bible and related literature placed God in a book, allowing the mind to roam beyond self, community and geographical boundaries. In other words, Best’s romantic solitudes with their transcendental offerings were not the same thing as a lone Tuhoe finding him or herself unprotected on a spiritual battlefield. Best’s Pākehā self had a different set of rules to those Māori selves he was encountering. Māori *being* was still qualitatively different from Pākehā like him; different again from what it had been in the time of Taylor in the 1850s, and of Marsden in the 1820s. Attempting to account for cultural difference, while not allowing for a

process model of cultural change, Best had become fixed on essentialist binaries of the civilised and the primitive.

Best possessed an atavistic element in his nature that the bourgeois cultural norms of the cities could not contain; encountering primitive nature as a child of the Enlightenment enabled him to balance his needs to access both worlds. He did not seem able to grasp at this point how men like Tutakangahau were able to remain culturally Tuhoe in a time of transition, becoming literate and politically engaged with the settler government. Such differences were conditional, not absolute; their engagement both active and passive. Best was attempting to crystallise Tuhoe (and so Māori) authenticity without regard to the dynamics of contemporary and recent historic cultural changes. This is partly because of his ethnographic models, such as Lewis Henry Morgan's 'Order of Ethnical Periods'.²⁰⁹ "And we, of the higher mental plane, have not yet lost that feeling": that is, imaginative Pākehā, attuned to Nature, could still share in the emotional, if not the animistic component of the "native mind". Europeans could imagine strange beings inhabiting the shadows, "yet not be afraid, that feeling has been overcome".

Experiencing Nature as a "Primitive Man":

What were *real* beings for Māori had become mere creatures of the imagination for the white bushman. This is not a trivial observation, writes Best in the same article, because "You are now treading the mental trails of primitive man, you are dropping back a thousand years, you are drifting back on the old world path" of creative mythopoeia. This insight, the ability to enter prehistory, came with a warning: the trail ended in the forms of superstition that had bound the settlers' English ancestors: "Get back into

²⁰⁹ See: Morgan, Lewis Henry, *Ancient Society*. A classification of cultures into seven distinct 'ethnical periods': these tabulated the epochs of human progress, and led on to the demonstration of the superior intellectual capacity of the 'Aryan family' (Morgan, 1878, 12). See also: (Kuper, 1988, 66-72).

open country for a spell. Destroy the forest, or it will conquer you". If a civilised man moderates and monitors his relationship to Nature, Best reasons that a love for her will result, and the ability to "probe the mind of primitive man, to see with his eyes, to think with his mind" (ibid.). This essentialised primitive is a variation of the "living fossil" school of thinking, in which eighteenth century French Enlightenment philosophers made use of ethnographic data to advance theories of parallel evolution, where the value of modern, non-Western societies "was their illustrations of how Europeans had lived in the past"²¹⁰ (Trigger, 1998, 38).

This caution over the power of natural forces, "going bush" or even "taking the blanket", had appeared earlier in Best (see Chapter 2): the fear of a too long sojourn in the wilderness leading to relapses into "a ruder state".²¹¹ There is fear of reversion, that the acquired virtues of civilised life will be overcome by untamed nature: or specifically here, becoming a Pākehā-Māori. An examination of the relationship between Best's ethnography at this point, and Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, published in the same year, would be instructive. The New Zealander is advising that only the restraint of a Marlowe can save Europeans from the degeneracy of a Mr Kurtz.²¹² The article presents the reader with a choice: visiting one's own earlier evolutionary stage of culture, acquiring the ability to see things with a primitive's eyes is possible for the lover of wild Nature who can bear solitude for a safe period. This must be a return trip, however; to allow the wilderness

²¹⁰ Cultural change (technological, political, moral etc) was viewed by these thinkers (eg Mirabeau) as universal and unilinear (from primitive to civilised) – and because it was assumed that different societies in many times and places passed through this sequence, the term "parallel evolution" is also used. Parallel evolutionists did not discount diffusion and migration as "additional sources by which innovations might be propagated". Therefore, psychic unity and human inventiveness could lead to similar, independently devised solutions to the same problems (see Trigger, ibid, 35-36). This of course has an egalitarian dimension (left to themselves, all peoples have the potential to become "civilised"), which negates the binaries of essentialised primitivism and civility.

²¹¹ "Taking the blanket" was synonymous with "going native", or "crossing the beach": forsaking one's own (implied civilised) culture for a simpler, more primitive existence.

²¹² Conrad, Joseph, *Heart of Darkness* (1902) (Conrad, 1990).

dominion would be a permanent descent to that earlier level - with all its attendant irrational superstitions. A managed Pākehā solitude can make educational contact with a mysterious Tuhoe being – for as long as the latter remains available, and the former maintains a requisite psychic distance in the hierarchy of human development.

Nature, religious thought and evolution:

Best's mature views on Nature encompassed two of his major concerns, which grew out of the transcendentalist philosophies discussed earlier: the springs of the religious impulse (comparative religion) and an evolutionary anthropology predicated on the doctrines of progress. This can be clearly seen in a late piece on comparative anthropology, first given as a public lecture at the W.E.A. at Trentham in August, 1920²¹³ (ATL, MS-Papers-0072-33). The paper was entitled "Comparative Anthropology – its Scope and Advantages" – subtitled, "A Paper illustrating the Benefits accruing from a Comparative Study of the Concepts, Usages and Institutions of Barbaric and Civilised Communities: With Illustrations taken from Maori Ethnography" (Best, 1920). Best was at the peak of his reputation by this time: a Pākehā tohunga (expert), entrenched in the Dominion Museum as he worked up his Tuhoe researches for publication. This lecture was written before his major works, dating from 1924 onwards, and serves as an introduction to the material more fully developed in *Maori Religion and Mythology, parts I & II*. A full examination of the paper will appear in the following chapter on Best's construction of Māori being and identity. The focus here is on a later, dual vision of Nature: nature as a religious source, and blind evolutionary nature. The article discusses the relationship of Māori to the natural world, and their place in an evolutionary scheme dictated by natural laws of progress. On nature and religion, Best argues that Māori religion exemplified the origins

²¹³ Workers' Educational Association, first established in England, was extended to New Zealand in 1915. This adult education initiative involved a partnership between the university on the one hand, and trade unions and affiliated bodies on the other.

and the development of religious belief; in the latter, their demise is proof of “the inexorable laws of Nature” (Best, 1921, 25).

As part of his discussion on the origins of religious belief, comparative religion, and the connection between religion and myth, Best uses Māori religious practice to evidence the growth of “natural religion” based on “the study of Nature” (ibid., 5). In this view, Māori gazed upon the “eternal laws of Nature” and the “varying phases of natural phenomena”, in order to account for the origin of the universe and humanity’s advent on earth. Despite clouds of “ignorance and superstition”, the mind of “uncultured man” personified and deified nature’s manifestations.²¹⁴ He reasons that such bedrock anthropomorphism evolved, over some unspecified period into a sophisticated supra-theism, the concept of a high (if not only) god, the Supreme Being, Io (ibid., 6). There is little explanation of the process by which this occurred nor any evidence given. He also asserts that this originating deity could not be propitiated with offerings, and was one “of whom no image might be fashioned” (ibid.). This has echoes of Protestant iconoclasm: an echo of the Mosaic law, absorbed at his father’s Sunday bible readings and prayer sessions (Craig, 1964, 18).

Reasoning from Emerson, he writes that Nature contained the key to Māori belief: that animism, anthropomorphism and deism all flowed from the same source:

The following remark by Emerson contains the kernel of the origin of such concepts as the Maori nature gods, and that of Io the Supreme Being: -
 ‘Nature is the organ through which the universal spirit speaks to the individual’ (Best, 1920, 7).

Coleridge is cited to the effect that “all knowledge begins and ends with wonder”, which must precede concrete knowledge and understanding. (10) The spiritual thoughts of a Dakota Sioux are put forward to develop the argument that wonder at Nature led Māori to develop their “mythopoetic

²¹⁴ “Uncultured” in this usage means not without any culture, but below the level of a modern, scientific civilisation.

imagery" (ibid.). Wordsworth is said to have read the same lesson from the book of the natural world, "recognising Io the Parent in the beauties of Nature", with her "sacred teachings as to ordered life and duty". Nature is the fount of the poetic instinct in humanity, from "Homer to Wordsworth to Tennyson". Nature affects all alike, and "the mythopoetic mentality of the Maori came straight from the heart of Nature" (ibid.). Best repeats his belief that their "surprising concept of the Supreme Being" is a result of their connection with "natural phenomena": a being who "as Emerson puts it, spoke to them through Nature".

To say that Nature induces poetry or a poetic response in all peoples says little about Māori; they are once more made representative of an earlier stage of human development, nature's children fashioning a natural religion.²¹⁵ This is a legacy of the Romantic reaction against the industrialisation of the West: the belief that the "natural man" was a poet at heart. If Best had read his Coleridge more closely, he might have pondered on the possibility that such a "Nature" was legislated in the mind, and that culture produces nature to order, in the intellectual fashion of any given era. Art to Best was proto-science, and fairy tales were primitive humanity's way of gaining insight into natural phenomena. Māori, as representatives of such a "Mythopoetic Age", explained the universe through poetry. Such polytheism and anthropomorphic inventions were superseded by monotheistic metaphors, which in turn, have been overtaken by science. Nature is now explained scientifically: by "the eternal law of change, the demand for reform, the desire to abolish mythical accretions" (ibid., 14). It is this development of Nature, made explicit here by the brave new science of anthropology, that Best uses to explain the fate of Māori.

We are in debt, he admits, to "savage and barbaric societies": the science of "Comparative Anthropology" makes this clear, in showing the slow acquisition of "crude forms of knowledge" (ibid., 16). Māori have survived

²¹⁵ For Nature - and the child's nature - as founts of religion and its apprehension, see Emerson's *Nature* (Emerson, 1961, 6, 24).

centuries of ignorance, and adapted to “stern necessity”; nevertheless, the process of “natural selection” must remorselessly cull the weakling, to “produce a more virile and capable population”. The rise and fall of civilisations is the lesson of this new science, and the “laws of Nature are merciless to the incompetent weakling. To those who do not obey her laws, a stern command goes forth:- ‘Get off my earth!’ “ (ibid., 17). Best professes sadness at this outcome for Māori, but states that when “a race has outlived its period of usefulness, or has transgressed natural laws that cannot be disregarded with impunity, then the end is near”. In obedience to “the inexorable laws of Nature”, Māori are being pushed aside, “submerged by a new and strange culture that [they] cannot assimilate”.²¹⁶ Whereas wild nature, as experienced by the Romantic temperament, has been presented earlier in his career as something distinct from human productions, here Nature and Culture merge, to produce a blind, irresistible evolutionary momentum.

This theorisation of nature, owing more to Spencer than Darwin, can also be read as the rationalisation of a political takeover. Far from being passive observers of the incoming Europeans, Māori had engaged at the outset from a position of strength - and had fought for equality and inclusion. They had taken what they wanted from Pākehā, assimilating whatever ideas and practices that strength allowed them. It was only to the unassimilable numbers of settlers and the demand for land that they proved unwilling adaptors. Best is correct in stating that Māori culture was submerged, but by weight of numbers, the utility of the new technologies and the force of arms – not an evolutionary bypass mechanism. Undoubtedly this swamping weakened their ability to manage cultural change, and left many demoralised on the margins of the new Pākehā polity. But to say, as Best does in conclusion, that Māori were temperamentally backward looking, rooted in

²¹⁶ Nature replacing “God as the active force” has been noted by Stocking in the work of Spencer (*Social Statics*, 1851, p6), where her “stern discipline” allows for a “biologization – of morals”. Best’s thinking here derives from this school (Stocking, 1987, 133).

Hawaiki rather than New Zealand, was not good science, nor even a passable fairy tale:

Our Maori predecessor has never fully identified himself with these isles, nor yet with the Pacific region. Ever his mythopoetic mind turns his memory to the far distant land of his origin. The stars he loves to greet are those that shone over his beloved homeland in the days when gods walked the earth (ibid.).

If Māori did experience such nostalgia for a homeland, it would only have shown them to be more – not less – like the settlers Best sprang from.

A philosophy of environmental determinism underlay Best's views on nature, and humanity's place in such a culturally defined location. He proposes a primitive mind, and a civilised mind, qualitatively different, responding accordingly to the extreme natural environment of the wilderness. Māori, specifically Tuhoe in the Urewera, exemplified this. Europeans could encounter the primitive psyche (their own, earlier evolutionary stage) by making contact with the fast-vanishing members of such a prior culture plane. This ranking is implicit in Best's thinking, as is the tendency to find romantic archetypes in the wilderness setting. The wild places of the Urewera become a site of struggle, first between Neolithic man and the environment itself, and then between Stone Age and Steel Age, as colonial possession is rationalised into an evolutionary progress. Sublime "nature" and blind "nature" are woven together, in a vista of natural and cultural improvements that must follow in the train of Māori displacement.

Conclusion:

The dialogue seen earlier with Tutakangahau illustrates how this was represented: Tuhoe knowledge was to be passed on to Best, Māori oral metaphysics transferred into Pākehā literary possession. Magic met science in the fashion of an ōhāki (farewell speech of the dying): Best styled himself as anointed by the old man - at a site of extreme isolation and secrecy - to carry

away such Tuhoe knowledge. Nature was a location for the passing away of the Tuhoe order in the face of an advancing displacement culture. He had taken part in an act of psychic transformation, encountering both unmediated Nature and neolithic spirituality at once. As one of Nature's mediators, he responded to the transcendentalist call, "the glamour of the forest", combining his own vision of the wilderness with an analysis of primitive man's relationship to it. He claimed to understand and identify with such men as Tutakangahau, "the old-time Maori", while remaining by his own definition a representative of scientific progress. He could satisfy his atavistic inclinations, as long as he stayed within the boundaries of this self-definition. Alienated from civilised comforts, he still belonged to Pākehā culture, remaining a member at all times, even when seeing no European for periods of up to two years. He was a serious seeker for truth and time confirmed this aspect of his work; yet he was capable of producing dross in the presence of gold. His scholarly reputation, his financial needs, and above all his need to belong - and *belong to power* - were paramount.

Best's philosophical foundations relied on European Romanticism and American Transcendentalism. In his culture wars with the missionaries, he was part of a larger, longer-lived debate that saw Nature as the voice of a depersonalised world spirit – an amalgam of East and West, through which he could interpret the Māori relationship to the natural world. His embrace of comparative religion and anthropology, and the dogma of progress gave him the tools to attempt an analysis of Māori culture, while at the same time rationalising its imminent demise. Theories of Romantic Nature assisted Best in explaining the "mythopoetic" psychology of Māori; a Spencerian evolutionary Nature explained their inability to assimilate with a progressive European culture. These were seductive models in explaining the inevitability of Māori extinction.

The fact that such models could not accommodate recent history, and flew in the face of social changes Best was well aware of did not detract from their plausibility. Many Tuhoe Best observed were different from Pākehā in their

relationship to the bush, and Māori as a whole were at a low point when he arrived in the Urewera. His conclusions at the time were dictated by the analytical paradigms available to him, his own experience and observations, and the sheer force of settler public opinion. It remains clear that the *nature* Best writes of was that produced by his *culture*: that when he looked on Waikaremoana, and at Tutakangahau as a forest dweller, a great deal of what he saw was a reflection of himself and settler society. To move from his earlier works seen in Chapter 3 to these forms literary dress suggests that there were two Bests: the serious seeker of authentic Māori knowledge and the colonial man-of-his-time with a need to make a living, to enhance his reputation, and to belong to the Pākehā power culture. It is not so much Māori that emerge from these reflections on Nature, but rather the European and American shadows of his literary influences.

Chapter 5. The Māori According To Best: “Ka tō he rā, ka ura he rā!”²¹⁷

“...it was in all cases difficult to carry them word for word in one’s memory, so my habit has been to make the speakers say what was in my opinion demanded of them by various occasions, of course adhering as closely as possible to the general sense of what they really said.” Thucydides.²¹⁸



Te Whatahoro Jury, 1841-1923, photographer unknown, ca 1900-1920, ATL F-24827-1/2. Jury became an important informant for Best in the Museum years.

²¹⁷ “A sun sets, a sun rises!” This pepeha (saying) appears as the last line in Best’s short history of traditional Māori society, *The Maori as he was*. It sums up his view of their trajectory in the evolutionary scheme of progress (Best, 1924 (1974) , 286).

²¹⁸ *The complete writings of Thucydides* (Thucydides, 1934, 14).

Best's mature writings created an image of Māori that is overdue for re-assessment. This chapter will argue that "the Māori according to Best" is part-field observation and enquiry, and part-imagination: a product of the emerging discipline of anthropology that arose in a nexus of racial theory and imperial expansion. Yet to speak in such a global, theorised language can obscure the journey of a tenacious autodidact towards objective and subjective forms of knowledge: Best was arguably our first real scholar of things Māori. Texts are examined that reveal the underpinnings of such concepts as "the mythopoetic Māori", reviewing the pillars of his vision of Māori identity and essential being. Did Best obscure and devalue through weak analysis the vast body of material collected and recorded in a life committed to the pursuit of Māori knowledge and life ways? Or does he rather merit his own estimation: that he was primarily a collector racing against time, whose store of primary material would prove invaluable to later generations of trained anthropologists?

The principal areas examined are: Best on Māori origins, the Semitic and the Aryan Māori; literacy and culture ranking, language and rationality; essentialism and Māori being, the mythopoetic Māori; and the Māori spiritual universe and the Io teachings. It is argued that these are the most consistent and important themes of his writing life, theorisations of Māori that wove them into European meta-narratives. The search for Māori origins located them in history, either sacred or secular; defining Māori being in evolutionary anthropology; and ranking their spirituality, in comparative religion. This all served to anchor Pākehā frontier intellectuals in the new land by assimilating Māori points of difference into Western discursive modes.

In his search for an authentic Māori being, it is argued also that Best was in part revealing his own atavistic needs and tendencies. In locating their origins, seeking out their mythologies and secrets (real or imagined) and attempting to understand what it was to be Māori prior to the arrival of

Europeans, he appears at the same moment to describe and locate a new way of being for himself and his inheritors. If it was a challenge for him to see Māori as Māori (and not a version of Pākehā), he reminds those coming after him that it is impossible to be Pākehā here without reference to Māori: Māori self-definition and Māori constructions of Pākehā. In attempting to reveal the mind of an immensely influential Pākehā, the aim will be to avoid the political accusations that he has misrepresented Māori; rather, that he is the author of modern visions of Māori being, requiring serious consideration in the present climate of historical revisionism. The great body of his work that addresses Māori material culture is not directly examined in this study. While material culture is an obvious way to gain a picture of a people, the focus here is principally on his interest in Māori spirituality.

The period considered here is “the Museum years”, 1910-1931, when Best was employed as resident ethnologist at the Dominion Museum.²¹⁹ According to Craig, his task was “to compile information on the different aspects of Maori life and culture in pre-European times” for a series of Museum bulletins (Craig, 1964, 138-139). This gave him the opportunity to read “manuscripts and journals” left by earlier collectors, a period when Best gained a wider view of ethnographic writings from Cook (“outstanding”) to White (“indifferent”) – all the while working on his own Urewera notebooks, and establishing an increasingly dependent relationship on the man who was to become his primary source, Te Whatahoro Jury.²²⁰ The latter’s contributions to Best’s theory of a Melanesian, pre-Māori tangata whenua (rejected by Smith), and his input regarding the Io, high god material (embraced by the older man) helped to undermine the kind of historical-material anthropology – such as *The Pa Maori* – which showed Best’s great strengths as a field worker (Best, 1927).

²¹⁹ There will some reference to pre-1910 material, most of which was synthesised and reformulated in the later writings.

²²⁰ This relationship is discussed in Craig (146-156, 167-174).

Best's time at the Museum was not always to his liking: he was poorly paid initially, starting in the Public Service late in life as a temporary clerk on a salary of £200 per annum.²²¹ He had a testy relationship with the director, Augustus Hamilton - this class-based conflict will be discussed in the final chapter. He was frustrated in his attempts to get his bulletins into print by the economies of the First World War. It required the intervention of Apirana Ngata in 1923, as Minister of Native Affairs, to instigate the establishment of the Board of Maori Ethnological Research, and thus to facilitate the publication of Best's work, beginning with the two volume general reference work, *The Maori* (1924), closely followed by the condensed edition, *The Maori as he was* (1924). Best continued to escape the city he loathed for trips to the East Coast, the Urewera and the Wanganui River - one of the latter with the English anthropologist, George Pitt-Rivers, in 1923.²²² Best had become increasingly well known and sought after overseas, since the publication of his first major article on the high god Io, in *Man*, the journal of the Royal Anthropological Society (Best, 1913). There he cited the influence of Andrew Lang,²²³ and named his sources as Tutakangahau and Te Whatahoro Jury. The threads of his research, which came together in these two major works of 1924 will now be considered.

Best and origins: the Semitic and the Aryan Māori.

Best's journey to his late, 'white tohunga' status will be examined first in his speculations on Māori origins, taking in the early and progressive debates on the Semitic and the Aryan Māori; and later, his views on the Melanesian ancestry of the first arrivals, based primarily on observations of the physical characteristics of Tuhoe. The appearance of his theories in the article "In Ancient Maoriland" (1896), the influence of and discussions with Tregear and

²²¹ Hamilton's successor, Thomson, recognised Best's poor pay, and fought a pitched battle over the years 1914-1929, to bring the older man up to a level of salary befitting his expertise. Best was earning close to £500 when he died. See, Te Papa Archives: MU000148, Staff (personal) Files: E. Best. (1887-1971).

²²² See, "A Visit to a Maori village", *JPS*, vol. XXXIII, No. 129 (1924), pp 48-65. Later included in Pitt-Rivers' *The Clash of Cultures and the Contact of the Races* (1927).

²²³ *The Making of Religion* (Lang, 1900).

Percy Smith,²²⁴ later disputes with Smith, Hammond and Williams, and the material provided by Te Whatahoro Jury will be considered. The search for what Ballantyne has called “ethnic origins and continuities within a multi-ethnic empire characterised by mobility, exchange and conflict”²²⁵ is the intellectual arena where Best can be placed (Ballantyne, 2002, 17). Searching for diffusionist explanations of Māori origins, Best was party to the spread of information, conjecture and prejudice that constituted British Indian Orientalism. His correspondence with the tireless Samuel Peal on matters anthropological is one example.²²⁶ Peal wrote from Assam in Burma to a large number of authorities in America and the Pacific, including Max Müller. The exchanges between these centres and sub-centres, fieldworkers and amateur theorists constituted a major intellectual project to analyse the work of empire, and classify its subjects. Best became a national and regional authority, in a line of ethnographic witnesses originating in the reports of James Cook, traders and missionaries, forming a growing archive that fashioned images of Pacific peoples. Müller’s foreword to the Reverend William Gill’s 1876 title, “Myths and songs from the South Pacific”, discussed shortly, is a classic example of this process of exchange between observers on the “frontier” and the theorists in the “learned metropolitan institutions” (ibid., 16).

The appeal by Best and others to Māori origins in an Indo-Aryan past (“Irihia”) was part of this system of colonial intellectual exchanges: a complex web, evolving from the British incursions into India and the Pacific over the

²²⁴ Best’s relationship with Smith was explored in Chapter 3: in the period under consideration here, we see Smith as an early champion of the “Io thesis” convincing an at first reluctant Best, to whom he gradually passed on the baton of the high god argument (Smith died in 1922).

²²⁵ Ballantyne, Tony, *Orientalism and race*, (Palgrave/Macmillan), 2002, 13-17. He argues for a reconceptualizing of the “spoked wheel” metaphor to a more dynamic overlapping image of decentred webs, sub-stations of colonial power and intellectual activity in a “system of circulation”, where the Polynesian Society and members such as Best and Smith were extremely influential brokers.

²²⁶ See, ATL, Correspondence and papers Display Dates : [1895-?] Reference Number : 80-115-02/03 Collection Record : Polynesian Society : Further records (80-115). Contains a letter dated 1895 from Elsdon Best to S E Peal in Assam, and lists of subscribers in Best’s hand, undated.

life of the Empire. Weaving Māori into such an Aryan whakapapa Europeanised them through the back door: they were different, but related, and could be valorised as lost relatives, “an offshoot of that wonderful race who for so many centuries preserved the sacred Vedas by means of oral teaching”.²²⁷ The subtext of this argument is that Māori – as long lost brethren from the Aryan gene pool – are relatives of Pākehā, a form of cultural “conversion” comparable to that attributed to the Christian missionaries. A related irony is that many Māori chose for themselves the route of Semitic identity – at least in those syncretistic religious movements now described as millennialist, where an identification was made with the Jews, and from Te Ua to Rua, it was to Iharaira (Israel) and not Irihia (India) that they turned to re-imagine themselves. The Old Testament contained a model of a persecuted and disenfranchised warrior people, tribal, bearing whakapapa and rich in story. The Māori millennialists were disengaged from the Orientalist project of relativising biblical anthropology; rather, they joined themselves to the whakapapa of Adam – which putative social scientists such as Best were at pains to discredit, in their attempts to establish anthropology as a science and themselves as authorities. For Māori, this may seem the devil of European ethnographic categories, versus the deep blue sea of a Mediterranean theology. Yet if Māori chose the latter as a mode of resistance to military subjection, while the former was employed to classify and historicise them, what matters is not who was right, but why such modes were accepted and deployed by the historical agents of each period. As both students and teachers, biblical co-translators and transmitters of Māori cosmology to missionaries and Pākehā officials alike, Māori themselves were early agents of an ethnic theology, which, as it achieved many and various hybridised forms, would lay snares for the later generation of ethnographers such as Best, who believed they could access a pristine Māori thought world.

It is important to see Best’s origin theories as part of a developing discourse, placing Māori on a geographically based timeline, belonging to successive

²²⁷ “In Ancient Maoriland”, (1), *The Hot Lake Chronicles*, (1896), Rotorua.

waves of human migration, and also locating them in an intellectual schema involving the rise of anthropology and the legitimization of a settler presence. His theorising of Polynesian migration resides on a scale somewhere between the amateur enthusiasts of British folklore studies and the emergence of the first generation of university-trained anthropologists on the Malinowski functionalist model (such as Raymond Firth), who were to eschew the origin debates and localise their research, based on material evidence. Best's generation were often self-taught, and while the debates were vigorous, there was no local academic structure to channel them, until his generation of frontier intellectuals had passed.²²⁸ When he cites Müller and Tylor ("In Ancient Maoriland"), he is speaking as an auto-didactic field ethnographer, located in this colonial system of information transfer and analysis. He relied on the authority of such experts to establish his own, earned experientially with Māori, studying the language and culture, fighting them, living and working amongst them – both *hoa*, and *hoariri* ("Friend" and "fighting-friend", that is "enemy").

Theories and speculations concerning origins were intimately involved in issues of culture ranking, the progress and the degradation of peoples. "In Ancient Maoriland" opens with a discussion of the role of literacy in the "march towards civilisation", and the role of oral literature in the preservation of race memory (Best, 1986, 1). The part that Māori had played, as an offshoot of Aryan culture, is a demonstration of the degradationalist tendency of isolated cultures, proving "an ethnological axiom" that such a scattered people "deteriorates in culture" (ibid., 2). Echoing Tregear's *The Aryan Maori* (1885), with which he was familiar, Best says that it doesn't matter which race Māori sprang from, "Turanian or Aryan, Acadian or Dravidian", or whether they marched west in the "Indo-Germanic migration or eastward a thousand years later into India". Anyone looking at Māori in his day would have seen

²²⁸ This is not to disparage the efforts and publications of the various philosophical institutes referred to earlier; but these were somewhat ad hoc, constituted on the lines of the members' interests and reigning fads. Men like Best were too old to take advantage of the new universities. In any event, he did not have the qualifications to matriculate.

evidence that they had “originally known a higher state of general culture” from which they had fallen (*ibid.*). Tregear argues that Māori and Pākehā are brother colonists, lately met in history’s migrations: “The Aryan of the West greets the Aryan of the Eastern Seas” (Tregear, 1885, 105).

Best examines this thesis in the light of a possible lost literacy: did Māori ever have a written script (Tylor says no race ever loses this ability, once it is gained)? He cites examples of the Indian origins of written scripts found in the Philippines and Java, but concludes there is nothing like these to be found in Polynesia, and that Māori therefore “passed through the East Indies long before the art of writing was known” (Best, *ibid.*, 3). He believes that nobody knew if Māori ever had a written script; they were well able to pass on their traditions and beliefs through a sacralized system of ceremonial teachings controlled by *tohunga*. If there was so little evidence of literacy in pre-European Māori society, why does Best bother discussing it? Here it seems to involve ranking Māori in “the endless chain we call Human Progress” (*ibid.*). In this views, literacy and civilisation are conjoined.

Māori may have been his distant relatives; here, Best is moved to haste in gathering their accounts of migration because the laws of progress meant genuine Māori were being lost forever. This “vanishing Neolithic race” were typified by Tuhoe (*ibid.*, 43). Best wrote that Māori origins could still be traced in the “interesting types to be found in this (Urewera) country”, which he “ethnologically divided into – 1. The Polynesian. 2. The Melanesian. 3. The Mongolian. 4. The Urukehu” (*ibid.*, 38). These observations, and accounts given by older informants, were the substance of his Maru-iwi theory: a pre-Māori *tangata whenua* (first people). He had previously noted in a visiting group of Tuhoe at Te Reinga in 1875 a people who looked “as if they had just stepped out of the plates in ‘Belcher’s Voyages’”, and speculates that this group had ancestry derived from divisions two to four above²²⁹ (*ibid.*). The third grouping he identifies from his American experiences: the Mongolian

²²⁹ Admiral Sir Edward Belcher, 1799-1877, British naval commander and explorer who visited the south Pacific in 1840.

with “the heavy features and sullen expression of a Klamath Indian” (Washington State), who may be seen “on any reservation from Cape Mendocino to Alaska” (ibid., 37).

The most revealing class is not so much ethnic, as mythic: the Urukehu, “the most interesting and singular type to be found in New Zealand”. He insists he is not talking about mere albinism, that “weak-eyed caricature of humanity...abhorred of the true ethnologist” (ibid.). He claims that the “urukehu of the Urewera are a distinct people, a white, fine featured – in a word – an Aryan people”. There were many amongst Tuhoe and the old men informed him they had always been there, claimed by some as descended from Turehu, a white-skinned race of early inhabitants (see White, Vol iii., 1887, 115). Evidently mythical says Best, and yet “what sub-stratum of fact may underlie these wild legends”? This creature “is in evidence...a mystery to his compatriots and a thing of joy to the anthropologist” (ibid., 37). He continues, “the best specimen I saw was at Ruatahuna – a young woman of some twenty years of age”. He does not seem to consider that this woman may have had Pākehā ancestry, or be a normal variation within a descent group:

For the mass of gold red hair took me far away to the land of Thor and in the small mouth, thin lips and straight nose I saw Arya of the Aryans, the strong, slightly prognathous jaw located her among the ancient Celts, the Esthonians of the Baltic. But her surroundings were Polynesian as her language. The Urukehu is a Sphinx (ibid.).

Such comments might best be analysed by psychoanalytic theory. Rather than hazard a more prosaic guess about her ancestry, she is transfigured in a twilight zone of inscrutability.

This woman is a doomed figure: as part of Tuhoe, and the “old-time Maori” in general, her origins are being recovered not that her grandchildren may read “the History of the Maori”, but rather that Pākehā readers may learn the “Great Lesson” – as taught by the “Law of Human Progress” (ibid., 42, 44). These “first born children” are giving way to “Teuton or to Slav, and

Primitive Man shall be no more". Best works under the imperative of urgent anthropology: that Māori are disappearing, and the need to "rescue the sacred lore of this fast vanishing Neolithic race from oblivion" (ibid., 43). His priority rests with the sacred lore and not the people, and he appears contradictory, in accepting the "annihilation of Inferior Man", while describing the "truly intellectual mind" of his many Māori informants and teachers. These are "little inferior" to their imagined Chaldean forebears with whom they lived before the "birth-time of the Vedas and the great Aryan separation – the ancestor of the Maori lived in the cradle of the World – and knew not his destiny" (ibid.). This destiny was to be overtaken in the east by his westward circling Aryan relatives, and displaced: the final image of this study is of a reconstituted Mataatua carrying the knowledge and its bearers in search of the final shore. Tuhoe it seems, know that the "Great White World", te ao marama, is passing from them, and they must "paddle silently and wearily onward in search of the 'Living Waters of TANE'" (ibid., 44).

This rendering of Māori origins in pre-history echoes the monogenist leanings of Taylor's biblical anthropology, perhaps revealing how difficult it was for Best to shift his intellectual moorings from a substratum of a Judeo-Christian historiography. This operation of an historical inertia undergirding his theological speculations will be considered when examining his views on Māori spirituality. Best's argument that the civilised European inevitably displaced the neolithic Māori – far distant relatives that they were – is not so different from the Reverend Richard Taylor's notion that the European (Japhet), descended from Noah, was dispensing God's will in teaching the Māori (Ham or Shem), and by extension, destroying their "lower" level of culture in the process of civilising them (Taylor, 1872, 36). The missionary's argument tended to an inclusion that would ensure cultural metamorphosis, by means of a civilising Christian elevation. Best's origin theories herald a complete erasure: once the primitive culture has gone, *Māori as Māori*

effectively disappear.²³⁰ This equated inherited social practice with genetics: culture was as rigid and tangible as DNA. Whereas English Victorian anxiety over their troubled present led them to seek a pristine medievalism to re-imagine and reaffirm the sense of an ongoing British racial identity, in this reading, the activities of their colonial relatives in New Zealand, busily establishing Māori origins, served rather to disestablish an indigenous people historically and politically.

Thirty years later, in summarising his views on Māori origins for the one volume survey, *The Maori as he was* (1924), Best was at greater pains to trace Māori migration routes and patterns, but had not moved far from his earlier stance. Using material derived from the Takitimu traditions, emanating from the Wairarapa wānanga that also gave rise to the Io stories, he proposed a composite Mediterranean-Indian route for the ancient forebears of modern Māori, effectively marrying the Semitic and the Aryan strands as he did so.²³¹ The earlier writing was based on Tuhoe informants, and Best's initial contacts in the Urewera; his later origin theories were influenced by Te Whatahoro Jury, who was also a conduit of information to Percy Smith. Best's own increasing reliance on Te Whatahoro and his sources will be examined later, but needs mentioning at this point, particularly as Best was writing a popular history of Māori for a mass audience, relying on poorly authenticated accounts, speculation, and often, a single source, portrayed as "traditional".

Best was heavily indebted to Smith, on the evidence of Chapter Two of this book (19-20), and Smith in turn had relied on European sources such as Fornander (Fornander, 1878), and Rarotongan informants. His *Hawaiki, the*

²³⁰ This argument had a political dimension: Taylor's defence of the humanity, rights and welfare of Māori was also fiercely opposed the English freethinker and editor of the *Auckland Examiner*, Charles Southwell. He objected to the missionary's monogenist anthropology as an obstacle to swift colonisation. See: Stenhouse, John, "Imperialism, Atheism, and Race: Charles Southwell, Old Corruption and the Maori", *Journal of British Studies* 44 (October 2005): 754 – 774.

²³¹ He admits at the outset that he is allowing one tribal tradition to stand for all, albeit "tribal versions in other parts differ somewhat from them" (Best, 1924 (1974), 15).

Original Home of the Maori (1904) was in its fourth edition by 1921, as Smith continued to revise and update the book - most importantly, since gaining access to the Whatahoro Jury manuscripts after 1909. It was at this time that Irihia first appeared in *Hawaiki*, in the section on traditional names for the “fatherland”. “This name”, writes Smith, “which occurs in the traditions of the East Coast Maoris (and in them only, so far as I know)” is a pre-Hawaikian name, perhaps referring to Java in the west, or islands further east (Smith, 1910, 72). He goes on to quote from “the Travels of Tamatea”, who journeyed to the South Island” and preserved writings (tuhituhi) in a cave, written material “brought from the distant land of Irihia, beyond Hawaiki, by Uru-whenua” (ibid). Smith speculates that Irihia must be Indonesia or further west, then quotes again from his source on matters spiritual and material: a junction of spirits (Te Hono-i-Wairua) at Irihia, and an actual migration from this land, carrying aria-toto-kore for provisions (identified by Smith as rice).

This is almost exactly what Best reproduces in *The Maori as he was*: going further than Smith, pointing to India as Irihia. In the 1921 edition of *Hawaiki*, Smith notes Best’s suggestion that Irihia “is a variant of the name Vrihia, used in the Reg-veda as that of India, or part of it, and this seems...very probable” (Smith, 1921, 59). What neither mention is that the sources of this material, containing references to Uru and Irihia, aria-toto-kore and mysterious writings, are manuscripts Smith copied from material supplied by Te Whatahoro. Simmonds and Biggs have noted the provenance of the oft-quoted mention of rice, as the “bloodless” food, and state “the only manuscript of this material is (53), the printer’s copy (Downes holograph) and it is fairly clear that the information came from Te Whatahoro”²³² (Simmonds, Biggs, Bruce, 1970, 38). They say also that the “only other mention of Irihia found in Maori traditional material” is in the Smith papers, as part of material noted as “questions on Whare-Wānanga”, dated “Sept. 25 1911”; and “copied from H.T. Whatahoro’s 3d volume” (ibid, 38, 26).

²³² This is a printer’s copy of *Te Kauae Raro*, part II of *The lore of the Whare-wānanga*, (1915).

There is circularity to these theories, and a small pool of informants feeding off one another. What Best summarises in *The Maori as he was* is drawn from manuscripts written by Te Whatahoro Jury, recording the recitals of Te Matorohanga and others at the Wairarapa wānanga begun in the 1860s and continued until the respondents' deaths in the 1880s.²³³ Smith uses manuscript copies from Te Whatahoro which are passed on to Best: Best cites Smith and Smith cites Best, but all depends on the weight which can be placed on the oral narratives and their subsequent interpretation by these two men. By 1924, Best is circulating Smith's opinion that "Tawhiti-roa and Tawhiti-nui are names for Sumatra and Borneo" and migrants from these lands eventually reached Hawaii (Best, 1924 (1974), 19). The theory relies on the above narratives, as do Best's other contentions that there was a land called Uru, "westward of India" from which a group migrated east to Irihia, identified as India. (18-20). This esoteric knowledge "has long been unknown to all save the few highly-trained record-keepers; the great majority of the people...believe that Hawaiki was the old homeland of their forefathers" (ibid., 18). He also cites "Condor's work, *The Rise of Man*", to strengthen his belief that Uru is the biblical Ur, "situated on the lower Euphrates"²³⁴ (ibid., 19).

Best here is managing to marry aspects of the Semitic Māori of the early missionaries (and the later Māori millennialists) with the Aryan Māori of late 19th century Pacific ethnography – while never accepting the "lost brethren" concept of the evangelicals. He elaborates this position more fully in a slightly later article on Māori migration, published in the *JPS* in 1927; this is his full and final word on the subject.²³⁵ Entitled "Irihia", this is a translation, presumably by Best, with an accompanying Māori text. The manuscript is sourced from "recitals...dictated many years ago by certain pundits of the

²³³ See, Parsons, M J, "Jury, Hoani Te Whatahoro 1841-1923" DNZB, updated 16 December 2003. URL: <http://www.dnzb.govt.nz>

²³⁴ I have not been able to trace this book. There were a flood of similar fin de siècle volumes.

²³⁵ "Irihia. The homeland of the Polynesians. Some additional data culled from the traditions preserved by the Takitumu tribes of New Zealand. Collected by Elsdon Best". *JPS*, December 1927, volume 36, no. 144, pp 330-361.

Ngati-Kahungunu tribe of the North Island of New Zealand and written down by young men who had acquired the art of writing" (Best, *JPS*, December 1927, 330). The main outlines of the migration are similar to those given in 1924, and the speculations derived from the text are similar. He fine tunes the notion of Semitic descent: that those from Uru who moved to Irihia gained ascendancy over the inhabitants, but that these traditions show Māori are of Irihia and not Uru (*ibid.*). He then unwittingly inverts that claim by stating on the following page, "the Maori carries the blood of the people of the far off land of Uru, wherever that may be" (*ibid.*, 331). Along with this apparent confusion, we are told that this material has been "culled" from Takitumu traditions, and that because the narrator "strayed off into divers by-paths", some "extraneous matter is here omitted". This is due to "the erratic procedure of some Maori narrators"²³⁶ (*ibid.*, 330, 331). We are therefore dealing with a manuscript of unknown provenance, edited to fit the requirements of the journal. Without access to the original, and the missing portions, the reader has to take Best's word for its authenticity.

The account speaks again of Uru, Irihia and the bloodless food product, and of tapu rites "connected with Io the Parentless" and various supernatural beings (*ibid.*, 334, 335). Best's translates the title: "Irihia. Te Whenua Tupu o Nga Iwi Maori o Te Moana Nui a Kiwa; he mea Kauwhau mai e nga Pu Korero o Kahungunu o te Iwi Maori o Aotearoa" (*ibid.*, 349). This he renders as: "Irihia, The Polynesian Homeland. Some Brief Traditions of the Racial Homeland of the Maori Folk of New Zealand" (*ibid.*, 334). While translation in pursuit of idiomatic usage and fluency is seldom literal, the Māori can be rendered:

Irihia: the original homeland of the Māori peoples of the Pacific Ocean; a matter told me by the experts of Kahungunu (of) the Māori people of New Zealand.

²³⁶ Best does twice note, "these imperfect traditions of the land of Irihia should be read in conjunction with the data published in Vol. 4 of the *Memoirs of the Polynesian Society*" (Part 2) (330, 332). This is in fact Part II of Smith's *The Lore of the Whare-wānanga, Te Kauwae-raro*, or Earthly Things (Smith, 1978 (1913)).

Best's expert source, via Smith, is in fact Te Whatahoro, Ngati Moe on his mother's side (a hapū of Rangitane and Kahungunu), and English on his father's. Smith elaborates: "Ngati-Kahu-ngunu...were a somewhat later migration...having their own series of traditions"; and more importantly, "The name these people give to the Fatherland is Irihia, a name not known to other tribes, excepting in one case, that I am aware of" (Smith, 1978 (1913), 7). According to Smith, this name appeared as early as February and March of 1840, when Te Whatahoro Jury's father, J.M. Jury wrote down the kōrero of two kaumatua, Te Apaapa-o-te-rangi and Kahutia, at the request of Tutapakihi-rangi (Peehi): "E One! Tuhituhia nga korero o nga rangatira!" (John! Write down the chiefs' sayings!) (ibid., 24). Jury records – and passes on to his son – "Ka korero ratou, ko Irihia he whenua rawa te rā" (They said that Irihia was very hot place) (ibid., 25, 27). Te Whatahoro carried on his father's activities, at first through Smith, then eventually in person, becoming the principal late informant in the work of Best, filling the role earlier taken by Tutakangahau of Tuhoe.²³⁷

Even had these "imperfect traditions of the land of Irihia" (Best, 1927, 332). come straight from the lips of Te Matorohanga, one of the experts in traditional lore Te Whatahoro depended on, via Te Whatahoro's faithful unexpurgated transcription, what do they really tell us about Māori origins? This account, centred on the person of Kopuratahi, "a high-born chief", tells of an eastward migration from places impossible to accurately identify, at an indefinite time: that is, not susceptible to a conventional western chronology reliant on written sources. Best admits as much in his introduction, referring to "the unknown land...[and]...some unknown period" (ibid., 330). While it is not possible to prove European influence on the kōrero or the mode of transmission, there are signs of this, particularly in the discussion on cannibalism (336) and the existence of Io worship on the tapu high mountain

²³⁷ See *Dominion Museum Bulletin No.4: The Stone Implements of the Maori* (1912), 21-22. Here Best validates Tutakangahau's earlier tree-felling karakia by asking Te Whatahoro what "hengahenga" means. This will be discussed more fully later.

of Irihia (ibid., 335. 339). It is these echoes of influence that point to unacknowledged syncretistic forces at work in the evolution of such writings.

David Simmonds, in his 1976 study, *The Great New Zealand Myth*, set out the following criteria for establishing and testing the authenticity of traditions: “*authentic tradition is that which was widely known and accepted as such by any social group in the pre-European Maori society*” (Simmonds, 1976, 10). Authenticity is indicated by occurrence in a number of sources, especially songs and chants, which in turn were more likely to lead to persistence into the present; the earlier an occurrence can be established, the better, especially in genealogical recital of cosmogony (ibid., 11,12). References to Uru and Irihia were late occurring, yet Best and Smith accepted and popularised their authority on slim evidence. Simmonds concludes: “tribal traditions of the origin canoes as published were found to be unreliable”; the focus of *The Great New Zealand Myth* was to survey other sources to find authentic traditions not of the Smith/Best school (ibid., 316). Te Whatahoro’s manuscripts in relation to Irihia are not supported by cross-referenced accounts, which casts doubt also on the authenticity of the Io references. There is a large amount of this recorded material, as presented here, that is *not* in the form of song, karakia or chant, nor whakapapa: how likely is it that this had persisted unchanged from pre-contact times?

Whatever forms such material may have taken prior to Māori reaching New Zealand - let alone leaving the Indian sub-continent - the question of the authenticity of such origin stories or traditions brings to mind Thucydides’ observation on the craft of the poet and the storyteller, where he writes that such oral accounts suffer in that:

The subjects [they] treat of [are] out of the reach of evidence... time having robbed most of them of historical value by enthroning them in the region of legend (Thucydides, 1934, 14).

The Greek historian’s quarrel with accounts that were “attractive at truth’s expense” is as sobering now as it was in the fourth century B.C. Best -

searching for Māori origins in order to locate them in the European grand narrative of cultural progress and colonial displacement - was forced to depend on such accounts as those discussed above. He knew they were not comprehensive, falling into that realm of legend to which Thucydides implies all accounts lacking concrete evidence belong. Best wanted his work to be an enduring deposit; he was hampered in this by such limited sources and the embryonic nature of anthropological and archaeological fieldwork techniques. In the Urewera, he was able to speak with those who were the grandchildren of pre-contact Māori culture, who still preserved some of the forms and material practices of their ancestors (albeit modified by Pākehā settler swamping). Once he found himself reliant on such informants as Te Whatahoro Jury, his distance from transitional figures like Tutakangahau was further increased: he found himself in the hands of a man as much a creature of both worlds as himself.²³⁸

Best and literacy: culture ranking, language and rationality.

We have seen in Chapter 2 how Best attempted to assess the ability of “primitive man” to absorb Western knowledge, especially religious teaching, and his view that this was limited by the so-called savage’s inability to engage in abstract thought: “for religious doctrines have little effect on a people unless preceded by intellectual culture” (Best, 1892, 18). This is shorthand for literacy, as Best equates the development of civilisation with the development of written script. His views on Māori *being*, examined next, include his early

²³⁸ By “transitional” is meant those Māori who were born early in the 19th century, early enough to have traditional pre-contact culture shape their lives, but who were transformed by literacy, Christian influence, trade, war and European settlement, and the vital change from orality to literacy (in both Māori and English) by the fin de siècle.

writings on literacy, ancient Māori scripts, Tuhoe syllabaries and his changing stance on Māori intellectual potential through long dealings with the old men of Tuhoe - his attempts to define Māori being through evolutionary anthropology.

The correlation of literacy and civilisation can be dated as far back as the Greeks; as Pagden has argued, language was taken by them to be “a prime indicator of rationality”. Within the one human species, *anthropos*, it was possible to distinguish a subspecies, *barbaros*: babblers who spoke no Greek and being unintelligible, were seen as unreasonable, without *logos*, the faculty of rational thought (Pagden, 1993, 120). In a Christian model, post-Babel, language becomes a product not of divine creation, but of culture, a human invention. The more complex a culture and civilisation, the more various and sophisticated its linguistic development became, whereas the “savage” was bound up in a “social world of restricted complexity whose function was limited to meeting the barest needs of survival” (ibid., 127). Vico suggested early peoples “thought in poetic characters, spoke in fables and wrote in hieroglyphs” - the next stage in symbolic writing, prior to the development of an alphabet (Vico, 1963, 429). Best expounds a similar view in an unpublished series of notes based on his researches into the peoples of the Philippines, written in 1894, shortly after the publication of his article, “The races of the Philippines”.

He begins by observing that “those who have studied the various branches of anthropology by which is gauged the development of human culture, have long determined that the invention of a simple form of written language has been the most important factor in such development” (Best, 1894, 45).

Literacy, as European social theorists had been saying since the early Middle Ages, was crucial for the transmission of “cultural and scientific progress” – a stage not seen as reached by the primitive peoples encountered by Western colonisers (Pagden, 1993, 135). Best saw literacy as one of the “...landmarks of [human] progress...the culture history of our race” (Best, 1894, 46). He cites

new discoveries in both the Nile and the Euphrates: “seats of advanced civilisations from the earliest times. But even here we can see that the same order of progress from a lower state has obtained” (ibid.). He discusses new evidence of “a primitive race” found seventy feet “below the present level of the Nile Valley” (ibid.). The implication is that just as we have ascended the ladder of progress from the time of the Egyptians, so too did they develop their advanced civilisation on the ruins of a less complex society.

Best speculated on this evidence of “palaeolithic man” (corrected from “Neolithic”): implements formed prior to the “historic era” that were possibly formed by “that most ancient and unknown people, the first race of man” (ibid., 47). His image of this creature is: “rude, savage, naked”, a humanoid, but “without knowledge, without laws, without religion, without arts, without letters – and possibly without language”. We “behold him as he truly was, not cultured and perfect from the hands of the Creator, but placed savage and brute-like on the earth, to work out his own salvation during countless aeons of time” (ibid.). This is a rebuttal of revealed religion, and an affirmation of evolutionary biology. There was no primal family and no garden – rather, a naked brute who must learn to survive, by working out his salvation. This is important in view of his tussle with the missionaries, but also in the development of the view that studying Māori (Tuhoe) in their near-primal environment gave the budding science of anthropology a window on “the Childhood of the Human Race” (ibid.).

Māori literacy – or lack of it – was a marker on the socio-cultural evolutionary tree: modern man was a child of the rupture between nature and culture that literacy invited, and not only was he now in possession of abstracts and universals, he was also the recorded holder of textually legitimated land and property. Best saw in Māori that harmony with nature Western man had once possessed, a romantic, poetic freedom from alienation (by those same literate powers of abstraction), and the primitive communism of an unlettered land tenure system. Agriculture, industry, global military might and the Native

Land Court were burying this world as surely as that “primitive race” in Egypt was buried seventy feet below the level of the Nile. Māori, as Pagden observes, “had been driven forward by his ‘discoverers’ and up the temporal scale...[into] a world that will one day be his own” (Pagden, 1993, 138). Best was able to fit Māori into Vico’s model: they had, according to Te Whatahoro, possessed an ancient pictographic script and the older men amongst Tuhoe had recently “learned to write from each other”²³⁹ (34:qMS 191; 164:qMS193) (Best, 1912, 34, 164). Their writing did not utilise “the true phonetic alphabet, but [used] syllabic form, or syllabary...this primitive form appeals to them more than our alphabet does” (ibid., 34). Best was also well aware of the development of literacy amongst Māori from earliest contact, right through to his relationships with such men as Tutakangahau. They were present at the first signs of literacy during Christian missionary journeys, and were to make numerous written representations to government agents and the settler parliament (see discussion of early Tuhoe literacy in Chapter 6).

This was not the image of Māori authenticity Best wanted to represent. While he changed his stance over time on the ability of primitive peoples to think in abstractions, he continued to seek an essentialist Māori *being* that was located in the pre-contact culture, and having been lost, bequeathed to its inheritors a mere pseudo-Māori identity. In a 1920s article, “The Maori Genius for Personification, With Illustrations of Maori Mentality”, he writes he has “heard statements made to the effect that the Maori possessed no power of abstract thought. Now, if there is one quality that the Maori did possess, it was that power” (Best, 1920, 32). Best had seen firsthand the ability of Māori to change and adapt culturally in extreme conditions, yet because he was determined to make historical change serve a model of cultural hierarchy, his views on Māori literacy are shaped by evolutionary paradigms. Unable to accept the “lost brethren” model of some missionaries, nor the “lost tribe” of

²³⁹ A note on scripts gives examples, such as symbols for “haere mai” and “koutou”, and states that other symbols were “inscribed or painted on the walls of Te Ana Whakairo, a cave or house at Waiau Canterbury by the Takitimu immigrants to preserve them. These were all the signs known to Whatahoro” (164: qMS193).

successive Māori millennialists – and seemingly blind to such indigenous Christian leaders as Wiremu Tāmihana – he located Māori on that timeline of the unlettered savage, placed on earth to work out their salvation over the aeons. He believed that pre-literate (“uncultured”) humans could not embrace progress without the loss of their essential nature. In his determination to locate Māori being in evolutionary anthropology, Best failed to note and validate what was happening around him. The rapid Māori embrace of literacy had leapt over any models imagined by nineteenth century anthropology, and was a key to their engagement with *te ao hurihuri* (the world of light) – the technological changes ushered in with the arrival of European modernity.

Essentialism and Māori being: the mythopoetic Māori.

This is most clearly in evidence in his construction of authentic Māori being as of a typically “mythopoetic” cast of mind. He derived the concept of this phase in human development from two major sources: the founder of modern anthropology, Edward Burnett Tylor, and the writings of the German philologist and Indophile, F. Max Müller, whose influences on Best have already been mentioned.²⁴⁰ Best cites Müller on numerous occasions, as in *The Maori* (Part 1, 1924), where he quotes from his Preface to the missionary William Gill’s *Myths and Songs from the South Pacific* (1876).²⁴¹ The key building blocks in Best’s evolutionary model of Māori are found in Müller. The concept of “the childhood of the world”; that “downright savagery” is still capable of producing “metaphysical conceptions”; and that the high “God has not left Himself without a witness (the concept of a Supreme Being), even among the lowest outcasts of the human race” (xviii, Gill, 1876). To the end of his life, Best would champion various manifestations of these views, along

²⁴⁰ See discussion in Chapter 2.

²⁴¹ “Parts of mythology are religious, parts of mythology are historical, parts of mythology are metaphysical, parts of mythology are poetical; but mythology as a whole is neither religion, nor history, nor philosophy, nor poetry” (Müller, 1876), cited in Best (Best, 1924b, 125).

with the substance of a comment made by the philologist early in the same preface: "...where are we to look now for living myths and legends, except for those who still think and speak mythologically" - in this case, the Māngaians? (ibid., vi). Such contemporary evidences of the growth of the human mind during this mythopoetic (pre-scientific) period of development were not to be pursued simply for their own sake, but "to find ourselves" in their re-enactment. Before the eyes of such post-Enlightenment spectators, the living drama of the human imagination would connect civilised beings with their psychic origins.

What this meant was that the Māngaians – and Māori – were seen as living fossils, to be studied for the light they cast on who Europeans once were. When the European ethnographer looked on such people, he saw not just another form of human society, but types of his ancestors at an early stage of evolution. This view of the Other is deeply narcissistic: the "native" exists to educate the colonist, and as a corollary of this, his obsolescence - in a developmental sense - invites the conclusion that extinction is inevitable. Physical and cultural oblivion awaited those whose educational value would certainly pall, in the face of political and economic imperatives. The presence of Müller in such a text is evidence of that web of correspondence Ballantyne has indicated; the reinforcement of global theorists by practitioners on the colonial frontiers, and vice-versa²⁴² (Ballantyne, 2002). Best was later to quote the German's foundational principles for ethnographical fieldwork – which he tried to put into practice – in his *summa theologica, Maori Religion and Mythology* Part I²⁴³ (Best, 1924a). Müller for his part regarded such men as Gill and Tregear as "safe hands" and "real scholars" (Müller, 1898, 152-153). Such a scholarly circle has no real entry point for the voices of those studied and classified.

²⁴² Müller can be found consulting Edward Tregear's "most excellent Comparative Dictionary of Maori and other Polynesian languages" in his *Anthropological Religion*, Lecture VII, "The Discovery of the Soul" (1892) (Müller, 1898, 203).

²⁴³ The need to be an eyewitness, "free from the prejudices of race and religion"; and an "acquaintance with their language" sufficient to discuss religious ideas and customs (Müller, 1898, 151 - 152).

The issue here however is not so much what Müller made of Best and his peers, but once absorbed by the New Zealander, how the German philologist's work was employed to analyse the status of Māori. To understand this, it is important to grasp the romanticism inherent in Müller's picture of humanity's intellectual evolution. As discussed in Chapter 2, his contribution to Best's ideas about primitive peoples centred on a language-based typology of human development, in the unfolding of a universal history. The concept of a mythopoetic age, as adopted by Best, was of an illogical hiatus in the regular progress of human development. Early myth-making peoples had no capacity for abstract thought, being prior to the levels of culture that later developed literacy – which in this view made abstract thought possible. This type of analysis derived by philology from the studies of Sanskrit and other ancient languages was to provide a convenient framework for Best to differentiate the essential nature of the primitive from the modern.

The influence of Tylor in the evolution of Best's thinking is just as clear, and to some extent overlaps conceptually. Tylor was not a linguist, however - his major contribution was to reinforce the idea of culture stages: "here Ethnology and Comparative Mythology go hand in hand, and the development of Myth forms a consistent part of the development of Culture" (Tylor, 1873, 284). Best has footnoted this citation in an annotated bibliography prepared for *Maori Religion and Mythology*, 1 & 2: nature myths, mentioned on pp 284, 285, 287 and 309 of Tylor, "are mythopoetic concepts" (Best, 1929). Tylor wrote of the "lower tribes...(displaying)...mythology...in its most rudimentary form...(being)...representative of the childhood of the human race"; of savages as the "modern representatives of primeval culture"; giving opportunity for investigation of "those most beautiful and poetic fictions to which may be given the title of nature myths" (ibid., Tylor, 1873). He also wrote on the subject of personification, noted by Best: that the "transfiguration of the facts of daily experience" into myths "is the belief in

the animation of all nature, rising to its highest pitch in personification" (ibid., 285). Tylor posited a "primitive mental state" where man saw "in every detail of his world the operation of personal life and will", where the forces of nature became "personal animate creatures"; this was based not on a "poetic transformed metaphor", but a broad philosophy of nature, "early and crude indeed, but thoughtful...and seriously meant" (ibid.).

In Best's time, Tylor and Müller were the equivalent of Marshall Sahlins and Joshua Fishman today: they were the leading overseas experts available to shape his omnivorous, self-tutored reading experiences. While he possessed no formal academic framework to critique them, he had certainly grasped the notion of mythopoetic man. He used it throughout his career to characterise Māori psychology, as a way of understanding the teeming multiplicity of the myths and folklore he took down from his Tuhoe informants. He calls in *Tuhoe* for a close study of the distinction between mythology and religion, "inasmuch as [they] appear to be hopelessly entangled and interwoven" (Best, 1996 (1925), 1016). In that work, Müller is thrice cited in Best's discussions on myth and folklore, having appeared as an authority ten years earlier.²⁴⁴ From Tylor's *The Origin of Religion* (1878), we are told that primitive man was well able to distinguish between "a real mother and a river called the mother" (Best, ibid., 981). The *Introduction to the Science of Religion* (1873) assured Best that the "irrational element" in mythology is a result of a "misunderstanding of ancient names", and far from "real events being turned into myths, myths have been turned into accounts of real events" (ibid.). Best gave the example of the way Nga Potiki of Maungapohatu "speak of the mountain as their mother", in order to establish themselves as tangata whenua, "the true original people of the land, the descendants of the earliest settlers, if not autochthones" (ibid.).

The slipperiness of such distinctions as "myth" and "real events" was hardly surprising when it came establishing ahi kā roa (longevity of occupation). The

²⁴⁴ See, MS-Paper-1187-016, ATL (1894), p49.

key here again is literacy (or its lack): in this analysis, myth is a product of oral culture, and literacy would establish historical fact and issues of land tenure more exactly - albeit backed by the force of arms. "The Maori enjoyed the relation of such tales and myths, inasmuch as he had no graphic system wherein to conserve such items, and spoken language had to supply the place of books" (ibid.). The ability to collapse history back into legend and myth (in the absence of written chronicles), gave Best and his peers the freedom to classify the stories they were told in ways that were politically advantageous. The appeal of "myths being turned into accounts of real events" is clear: Māori origins and arrival were open to debate, and once European settlement was backed by force of arms, the written record of ownership in the Native Land Court became the only valid claim to land, marked by this process for eventual sale and transfer of ownership. Mythological title was by definition unreal.

Yet while Best's presence in the Urewera as quartermaster on the road was funded by his role in the vanguard of disenfranchisement, his aims do not appear as primarily political: they appear, as much as anything, to have been existential. He was trying to find not only the meaning and the code of a vanishing Māori universe, but his own place and validation in the unfolding drama of colonial progress and native loss. His attempts to uncover the shape of Māori spirituality and distinguish between an ethical religious system and practical superstition are at the heart of his own search for meaning and belonging. His role as ethnographer both in the Urewera and later, in the Dominion Museum, was not simply that of a student and recorder of difference, but as a collector, preserver and curator of an endangered culture. His recording of Tutakangahau passing on to him the mantle of a *tohunga* places him more deeply in the culture than simply as a scientific observer: it is a validation of his needs, as much as those of Tutakangahau and Tuhoe. Best had no faith in the ability of Māori to preserve their history, and had his chief informant say so.

His insistence on the distinction between the mythic stories of the primal children (Tane and Tu), and the “sacred ritual” pertaining to them distinguished as religion, is a function of this mission: preservation, classification and analysis. Best saw a low-level mythological world of folk tales and fairy stories (*kōrero tara*), wanting any “ethical element” at one end of the scale, and “carefully conserved esoteric knowledge” at the other (Best, 1925, 1015-1016). He formulated this hierarchy as follows:

To put the matter in a concrete form, Maori mythology was Maori philosophy, abstract theories evolved in order to account for natural phenomena, etc., while the ordinary form of Maori religion was essentially practical (*ibid.*, 1016).

At times he uses the words religion, mythology and philosophy almost as synonyms in a Māori context, but the meaning is plain: their intellectual energies were channelled into mythological explanations of universal and human origins. These creation and hero stories had a ritualistic outcome in daily life that corresponded with Western religious practices; fairy stories and superstitions were the province of the rank and file, while an esoteric priesthood controlled the higher mental planes of Māori thought. The foundations of Best’s mature writings are contained here: the mythopoetic thought life of Māori, and the concept of a sequestered priesthood who guarded the knowledge of Io, the Supreme Being.

Tuhoe was completed in 1907, before Best left the Urewera; during his museum years, he collated material and developed his earlier views on “the Maori mentality”. By 1920, he was ready to develop into a typology his observation that Maori thought was exemplified by a tendency to allegory and the personification of natural phenomena. In a paper read before the Wellington Philosophical Society on May 18th of that year, Best laid out his thinking in this area, prefaced by a longish prologue on the supremacy of Io, from material contained in “translated passages from a speech made nearly 60 years ago by a teacher of the tapu school of learning” (Best, 1920, 7). There is little doubt he is referring to material from the Wairarapa wānanga, the *kōrero* of Te Matorohanga and Nepia Pōhuhu, taken down by Te Whatahoro

Jury from 1865 onwards. Best bemoans the general ignorance of the meaning of “native myths”, attributing this to a poor understanding of “the mentality of uncultured man”. (1) Matters such as the origin of the universe, he explains, and those of natural phenomena “are taught in the form of allegorical myths” whose most remarkable feature “is that of personification” (ibid., 1-2). He repeats the observation that this tendency to anthropomorphism is common to all those “of a similar culture stage”. Animism (or “animatism”) is the key to a belief that “all natural objects and phenomena possess an indwelling and vivifying spirit”, which then develops “into a personified form” (ibid., 2). Such “primitive beliefs”, combined with seeing all things “as having a common source, contain the kernel of Maori mythology”. Although he was to expand on this, the paper above contains the first major outline of Best’s thinking on such matters – and on the place of Io in the Māori pantheon.

While the focus here is on Best’s conception of the Māori psyche, at this time he was also formulating Io as the ground of all being, a causeless cause: “...in some unexplained manner, he caused earth and sky to exist” (ibid.). These were personified as Rangi and Papa, but Io – although apparently *not* a personification – is characterised here as “the primal being”, “the supreme”, and “Io the Parent”. Behind the personified forces - whose progeny are the seventy “atua, or supernatural beings” among whom was Tane - lies a greater being who has brought the world into existence, where each thing lives “according to the manner of its kind” (ibid., 4). The function of all things was arranged by “the intention of Io”; he appointed guardians over the twelve heavens, “being the very acme of all welfare, of life, the head and summit of all things” (ibid., 6). And as Io is the “head of all things, then all things become tapu through him, for without a lord, no thing can become tapu”; as “all things are centred in him, there is nothing left to be controlled or directed by any other god or being” (ibid., 7).

All of the above remarks Best says he has translated from the Wairarapa manuscripts: they are put forward as the theological ground out of which the

Māori mythopoetical imagination sprang. While they do not “embody much information as to personifications”, they do “illustrate Maori mentality”. They show how the “superior minds of a comparatively uncultured folk” were able to break free from shamanism and “a belief in malignant deities” (ibid., 7-8). He imagined these Māori ancestors conceiving of “a supreme being of nobler attributes”; and “wrenching asunder the bonds of gross superstition” as they broke free from age-old darkness and “pressed forward on the difficult path towards monotheism” (ibid., 8). There will be more to say later on Best and the Māori spiritual universe: it is worth noting here that as he sought to locate a myth-making tendency in Māori, he was also fashioning new mythology. Io by this reckoning is a bloodless figure, resembling Jehovah as a universal potentate, but not intimately involved with humankind. Of greatest interest is the elevation of tapu (extreme sacredness) from the earth to the heavens – its least likely abode before the arrival of the missionaries. These Māori theologians are more akin to liberal progressives and children of the Enlightenment than those observed by Europeans at the point of earliest contact.

The remainder of this manuscript focuses on what the title promises, detailing the many and various personified forms and forces of nature. Much of the material contained here and in another paper, “Personification in Maori Myths”, found its way into *Maori Religion and Mythology, Pts I & II*.²⁴⁵ These two major works were to be a comprehensive view of all aspects of Māori religion and mythology; it was in Part II that Best concentrated on myths and folk tales, the role of personification in these, and European readings of this phenomenon. He devoted a section to this subject, based on the above manuscript (XI: D, pp 290-327), which is the basis of the following remarks.²⁴⁶ Best’s concern was to show that Māori still thought and acted on a stage of

²⁴⁵ This was copy for what was to be the Dominion Museum Bulletin No 11 – completed by 1929, still unpublished at Best’s death in 1931. It finally appeared in 1981. See foreword (Best, 1995, 10-13).

²⁴⁶ For earlier writing, see the pamphlet *The Mythopoetic Maori* (Best, 1922), a simplified version; also, sections in *The Maori, vol I*, pp124-231, (Best, 1924b), and *The Maori as he was*, pp44-46, (Best, 1924 (1974)) which reprise similar arguments.

cultural evolution that Europeans had passed through - "the mythopoetic stage of mental growth" – and as Pākehā were no longer "in true sympathy with it", they were apt to look at "the personifications and origins myths of the Maori from a wrong point of view" (Best, 1976, 290-291). For Best, the true home of personified qualities such as "Peace and Charity etc" was in poetry; the earth was no longer "Terra Mater", all valid Western knowledge now being mediated through science alone. "Barbaric man explains and teaches in an allegorical manner", and unless Europeans tried to enter the Māori world-view with some sympathy, they would err grievously, and misinterpret "his beliefs, concepts and teachings" (ibid., 291).

He gave the example of Shortland's claim that "Maori regarded the powers of Nature as concrete objects, and so designated them as persons" (ibid.). Best objected that while Māori did personify thunder and lightning, they never viewed these immaterial objects as "being of a concrete nature", but personified them "simply because there was nothing tangible about them" (ibid.). Material things were also personified, as part of an effort "to understand causality, the origin of things"; these allegorical teachings "were the precursors of science", betokening its dawn. Best argued that these manifestations of a proto-science were not "evidence of an inferior mentality" (as he read Shortland's view), but simply Māori obeying "the mental urge of his race" as did the composers of the Old Testament. Both alike were myth makers, "saturated with superstitions and ignorance", trying to pass on knowledge and moral lessons according to their ability at those specific eras of human development. Cosmic generation, Best said, with chaos, space and light personified, did not prove that Māori believed these were beings in human form mating "as do members of the animal kingdom". Rather, this was Māori evolutionary theory, "of the origin of the universe", just one more example of the "Polynesian genius for personification...carried into every department of the racial and tribal mythology" (ibid., 293).

The aim here is to show that while Māori did things differently, they were kin to Pākehā as immature developmental brethren. They were scientists in

embryo, and no more superstitious than Best's European forebears (or those who still clung to Semitic mythology such as the Bible). While Māori might speak of trees and stones as having indwelling spirits, and personify a piece of sandstone, they certainly did not "visualise them as sentient beings endowed with human faculties" (ibid., 292). If there was a lack of terms to describe what Europeans called abstract qualities, there was a notable "array of names representing the diffusion, the acquirement, and the practice of knowledge"²⁴⁷ (ibid., 297). Best attempts to elevate Māori epistemology above popular Pākehā misconceptions, and yet locate it below Western science on the evolutionary tree. Rather than visualise humanity on parallel paths, or as expressing similar aptitudes under differing conditions, he layers global human development as a chronological progress. The idea of the mythopoetic Māori can be as one-dimensional as the notion that science had superseded more intuitive, "poetic" modes of thought in the West. While Best had an encyclopaedic body of invaluable material to contribute to the store of knowledge concerning the pre-European thought world, mythopoetic psychological models tended to be reductionist: they confined Māori psychology to a romantic view, which could not admit that there were also intuitive and poetic elements that underlay empiricism and the scientific lenses of modernity.

The Māori spiritual universe: Io, and comparative religion.

We have seen how the foregoing attempt at classification defined Māori being, in an existential sense, and ranked them in the strata of evolutionary anthropology. This was a part of Best's larger project: to analyse Māori spirituality and locate them in a schema of comparative religion. He also proposed a two-tier system of belief and practice: the esoteric Io school and the practical observances of an untutored laity, a system reminiscent of the churches he despised. The context of these arguments is his evolving interest in Māori spirituality: the role of his significant mentors (Tutakangahau and

²⁴⁷ See his list of personified forms of knowledge, p 313.

Te Whatahoro Jury), his identification with the tohunga Te Matorohanga, and a preliminary discussion on his influence over future understanding of Māori terms for spiritual matters. How successful was Best's attempt to look at Māori on their own terms? Did he ultimately suffer from a failure of the imagination, turning them into a form of Pākehā by unearthing a hidden and spurious tendency to monotheism in traditional Māori culture? Or was there actually a hierarchical system with esoteric orders in pre-contact Māori belief and practice? The development of the Io thesis was also a part of Best's long-term relationship with his early mentor, and one time employer during his Urewera years, Stephenson Percy Smith. The older man's advocacy of the high god argument, from 1907 to the publication of *The lore of the Whare Wananga* in 1913, bore fruit in Best's final convictions regarding Io.

In all cross-cultural relationships, there are the needs and aspirations of all parties to consider: to be credible, men like Best needed authentic sources of information, and informants such as Tutakangahau and Te Whatahoro Jury needed a Pākehā amanuensis to record, or validate their knowledge. This involved a transmission of power: Best's mana was increased by access to "insiders", as was theirs, by meeting Pākehā needs and controlling the sources. The much litigated existence of a Māori supreme being is a case in point. Controversial for close to a century, the pre-contact verity of a Māori high god, Io, has been holy grail to those Pākehā and Māori who wished to establish theological equivalencies in both peoples, and for those saw otherwise, an example of syncretistic influences in Māori religious thinking. As one of the former school, and a major populariser of the esoteric Io priesthood theory, Best is important in a discourse that continues in contemporary Māori theology. A number of important studies have addressed this question, from Te Rangi Hiroa (1949), through to Thornton (2004); opinions vary widely from the Māori anthropologist's sceptical dismissal, to the Pākehā classicist's enthusiastic embrace.²⁴⁸ The following

²⁴⁸ See (Buck, 1949), (D. Simmonds, Biggs, Bruce., 1970), (J. Z. Smith, 1982), (Head, 1995), (Simpson, 1997), (Thornton, 2004).

brief background relies on work by J. Z. Smith (1982), and Simmonds and Biggs (1970).

Smith's study of the evidence for and against a Neolithic high god in New Zealand came down to this: "*the Io cult is an instance of Maori syncretism*" (80); it was certainly not "Neolithic", nor the "Polynesian creation myth" (Smith, 1982, 88). As its cosmogony first appeared in print in the *JPS* in 1907, this could not "be used as evidence for *Urmonotheismus*, or for the nature of archaic ritual (ibid.). Understanding "native work", assessing the religious responses of Māori post-contact, was the only valid route to grasping the appearance of the Io teachings, "*homo religiosus...being, pre-eminently, homo faber*" (ibid., 89). In relation to surviving documentary material, manuscript copies of the original Tāne-nui-a-rangi papers - which formed the basis of Percy Smith's *Te Kauae Runga*, Part 1 of *The Lore of the Wharewananga* (1913) - have been extensively surveyed by Simmonds and Biggs (Simmonds, Biggs, 1970). It was in these manuscripts that the Io whakapapa and creation myths first appeared in any great detail.

As seen earlier in the debate on origins, Smith, and later Best were influenced by material from the Wairarapa wānanga of the 1860s, delivered by Te Matorohanga and Nepia Pōhuhu, transcribed and preserved by Te Whatahoro Jury, approved by the Tāne-nui-a-rangi committee in the early 1900s, as constituting a hidden treasure of traditional knowledge. Smith embraced this reputedly tapu material with enthusiasm, and proceeded to edit and prepare articles for publication in the *JPS*, and two volumes on the sacred lore of the whare wānanga. Best, initially, was harder to convince on Te Whatahoro, doubting his proficiency in Māori, and sceptical of his overall credibility. But as his position at the Dominion Museum was still tenuous, and his superior Hamilton was an enthusiast for the work of the aged tohunga, after meeting him in 1909, and finding his own theories of a Melanesian origin for Tuhoe Māori were backed by Te Whatahoro, he embraced the new informant who was to fill the gap left by the death of

Tutakangahau in 1908.²⁴⁹ This was to be a crucial departure from his stated aims of gathering information in the field from native speakers, at first hand.

The primary point in this debate over the authenticity of the Whatahoro manuscripts is the fact that they were products of a *newly literate culture*. Whatever Te Matorohanga may have said, there is no way of knowing with any certainty that Te Whatahoro was both an accurate scribe and later, a scrupulous editor. The oral transmission of pre-contact knowledge was a world apart from the transcription of these kōrero for the sake of preservation. For Smith and later Best to place so much weight on the supposedly authentic traditions of a minority amongst Māori, and then to generalise in regard to a previously hidden spiritual dimension, was a leap of faith on their part, and one not universally shared by their colleagues in the Polynesian Society, especially the missionary members. The longest lived and most controversial teaching to emerge, that of the supreme god, Io, rested at that time on a small number of occurrences outside of the Wairarapa manuscripts, and in the surviving documents themselves, now only in copies Smith made of “a book owned by Te Whatahoro, and credited to Te Matorohanga by Smith” (Simmonds, Biggs, 1970, 36). Simmonds and Biggs make the point that the only primary material for Io-matua and his pantheon of gods is found in the second chapter of *Te Kauae Runga*, none of which appears in the extant copies of the Tāne-nui-a-rangi manuscripts (50, 51, in their system), as handed to the Dominion Museum in 1910 (ibid.). They accept that the body of the Tāne-nui-a-rangi manuscripts correspond with what appears in Smith’s *Te Kauae Runga*, and that the traditions can be considered genuine, but this does not apply to chapter two, which contains the Io material (ibid., 41). Best allowed himself to be persuaded of their authenticity, a process that gradually placed him with Smith “in charge of mediating Māori identity”.²⁵⁰ As Head has pointed out, the Io teachings began their life as an abstraction, in thrall to the authority of the written word as seen in the Bible,

²⁴⁹ See Craig (1964), 146-163, and Sorrenson (1992), 36-39.

²⁵⁰ Head, Lyndsay, lecture given at the University of Canterbury, Christchurch, MAOR 324, July 23rd 2003.

which presented a “written High God” to Māori. This encouraged a search for equality that culminated in the ethnographic seal of approval by Smith and Best, at a time when overseas authorities such as Lang were advancing the “high god of low races” concept.

Best’s “conversion” received its first major public airing in a 1913 issue of *Man*, the journal of The Royal Anthropological Society, in an article entitled, “The Cult of Io, the Concept of a Supreme Deity as evolved by the Ancestors of the Polynesians” (Best, 1913). The introduction is probably the most revealing section. Best refers to Lang’s *The Making of Religion*, and the chapters on “The High Gods of Low Races” and “More Savage Supreme Beings”, but refrains from offering any opinion one way for “the above-mentioned theory” (ibid., 98). He is a mere collector of “original matter...from neolithic man” content to “place the same on record”. While willing to defer to overseas experts, he was not slow in casting doubt on the credentials of unnamed local writers who dismissed the notion of a Māori supreme being. His authorities for proving the existence of a Māori “Supreme Being” were “an old tattooed survivor of the neolithic era” (Tutakangahau) and a “remarkably intelligent and intellectual native, now seventy-three years of age, who was taught the old-time beliefs of his people during his youth” (Te Whatahoro) (ibid., 98-99). This seamless conjunction of the pre-historic sources and Western literacy obscures as much as it reveals. The informant in 1903 (Best mentions the neolithic survivor as putting him “on the right track...ten years ago”) was cited as Tutakangahau in *Tuhoe* (Best, 1925, 1026-1027).²⁵¹ In an earlier discussion of the existence of Io, a more tentative Best recalled a discussion with Tutakangahau on a “god of very ancient times...the beginning of the gods” (ibid., 1027). Pressing him further later, the old man clammed up, supposedly under pressure from his family: “this was, however, the only subject on which he declined to talk” (ibid.). Best speculates about Io and “lower orders of tohunga” being debarred from ritualistic functions. He resolutely denies any missionary influence; as will be seen shortly, in his notes

²⁵¹ See section on *Tuhoe* in Chapter 3.

on Whatahoro's contributions, he was later willing to accept such a possibility.

Tutakangahau was hardly a pristine tattooed neolith; his reluctance to say more was just as likely due to the fact there was no more to say. The old man had been assiduous in giving Best information since they first met in 1896 – this was his source of power in the relationship – and had there been more to tell, Best would certainly have heard in time. The belief put forward by Best that there could have been no missionary influence belies Tutakangahau's involvement with Te Kooti and Ringa tu teaching, all of which began long before the Pākehā ethnologist entered the Urewera.²⁵² Had the missionaries not had such a marked effect on Māori, Best could hardly have been so hostile to their teaching - they were more his enemies than of those Māori. The supposed imperviousness of the Io cult to missionary contamination is taken up again in the 1913 *Man* article, when the ethnographer argues that the knowledge Te Whatahoro took down from “two of the last survivors of the Maori priesthood” had been taught them “in neolithic times” under a tapu system. Such knowledge was “jealously conserved” and kept “aloof from European missionaries” (Best, 1913, 99). What he does not mention is that Te Matorohanga had himself been a Christian convert,²⁵³ and that Te Whatahoro, the scribe, was born the son of an English carpenter and Māori mother on a mission station, and late in his life, converted to Mormonism.²⁵⁴ These two major sources had had enough contact with missionaries and Christian teaching to make suspect any confident assertions about their impermeability to biblical influences.

²⁵² See following Chapter 6.

²⁵³ On Te Matorohanga as a tradent, see also Buck (1949), pp 13-18: On the Moriori, “...some of it may have been composed within the walls of the house of learning...much was added after the walls of the academy had fallen in decay”(14); and as a convert to Christianity, both he and Te Whatahoro had, “...converted to Christianity before the detailed story of Io was committed to manuscript” (526).

²⁵⁴ From 1886 to 1888 he assisted Mormon elders in translating the Book of Mormon into Maori. On 26 June 1900 he was baptised into the Mormon church and at the same time confirmed, at the Papawai branch. Parsons, M. J. 'Jury, Hoani Te Whatahoro 1841 - 1923'. Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, updated 16 December 2003 URL: <http://www.dnzb.govt.nz/> .

Best is less concerned with establishing their credentials than in putting forward Io as evidence that an “inferior race”, a “savage people” was capable of evolving a particular type of “Supreme Being, a creative and eternal god, a Deity that did not punish the souls of men after the death of the body” (ibid.). Furthermore, reading the evidence would prove not so much that Io was especially Māori, but that he “occupied a much higher plane than that of certain old-time Semites”. What appears to be a defence of Māori is one of a series of attacks on the Old Testament Jehovah, thirsty for blood sacrifices and eager to consign human souls to eternal punishment. Best’s quarrel with that kind of god is the defining characteristic of his arguments for the existence of Io. Māori, savages that they supposedly were, had evolved a more humane deity than that preached by the missionaries in their attempts to civilise them; and cruel as they were said to be in their warfare and cannibalism, they were too sophisticated to produce the kind of god that would preside over the eternal torments of damned souls. These kinds of remarks reappear in many of Best’s references to the Christian god, in relation to his defence of Io. They suggest that in Best’s hands, Io is a stick with which to beat the missionaries, a critique of the establishment churches, and yet a congenial spiritual being that he could accept in the absence of any other. He appears to champion Io as much to resolve his spiritual conflicts, as to valorise Māori spiritual evolution.

The remainder of the *Man* article is a précis of the Io material as it appears in *Te Kauae Runga*: there was a higher class of priests, the sacred name of Io was never uttered except *in extremis*, or in the form of a synonym, such as “The Beyond...or some such term” (ibid., 99). Io is omniscient by means of a large stone that sits before him at his dwelling place, showing “all that was occurring in all the different realms or worlds” (ibid., 101). Why an uncreated, eternal being would require such a material lens is not explained. Best writes of an informant who told him all things possess a wairua, else matter could not exist; further, that all things exist by Io’s will, “albeit he begat no being”, and furthermore, all matter contains “a portion of his spirit” (ibod., 102). With these emanations originating with Io, he concludes, “there is but one further

step to take: That fragment of clay *is* Io" (ibid.). Best has moved from an eternal prime mover (deism / monotheism) to an immanent being who inhabits creation (pantheism). To quote "an old teacher of the sacred School of Learning" – possibly Te Whatahoro – "All things are one and emanated from Io the Eternal"²⁵⁵ (ibid.). Such indigenous transcendentalism would be shaped by Best over time into a Māori monotheism, the *kura huna* he had been seeking. In order to complete and fulfil the quest he had begun in Urewera with Tutakangahau as his principal guide, he came more and more to depend on Te Whatahoro Jury, who became the major informant of Best's maturity - the Dominion Museum years.

Best's transformation from field-working ethnographer into a form of secular priest presiding over the hidden knowledge of Māori religious esoterica was completed in the years he spent writing up notes made in the Urewera years.²⁵⁶ His notebooks are a major source, showing the informants he relied on; from 1911 onwards, the name that occurs with increasing frequency is that of Te Whatahoro.²⁵⁷ A study of Notebook 11 (1912) gives a clear indication of how deeply dependent Best became on this single source to structure his thinking about the Io thesis, the role of missionaries, and from the point of view of his own psychological needs, his identification with the tohunga, Te Matorohanga.²⁵⁸ The notebook begins with material from older Tuhoe informants (Tutakangahau, 1905-1907), continues with more from Tuta Nihoniho of Ngati Porou, but is predominantly composed of that supplied by Te Whatahoro. This reflects both the loss of the Tuhoe elder, and Best's new position as Museum ethnographer: what he had gathered in the Urewera, he

²⁵⁵ See, "Comparative Anthropology" MS-Papers-0072-33. Best refers to a conversation between two speakers (almost certainly Smith and Te Whatahoro): the questioner asks, leading, "Then you believe all gods are one?" "Yes", replied the old man, - "All gods are one; but you must not tell the people so". The reference is to the "most learned native now living" (c.1920). Both Smith and Jury were alive at that point (Best, 1920, 10).

²⁵⁶ See Appendix: "Elsdon Best: elegist in search of a poetic", Section 2, Best and his poetry in the 'Māori Twilight' ". Margery Perham gives a powerful description of the old ruānuku (wise man) in his room at the Turnbull, two years before his death.

²⁵⁷ Te Whatahoro Jury is variously referred to as "Te Whatahoro" and "Whatahoro" in Best's notes and writings, and here – he is the same person.

²⁵⁸ ATL, Notebook 11(1912), q191, 193, 194.

intended to shape in Wellington. This transition is seen when Best asks Te Whatahoro to explain a term used by Tutakangahau in a tree-felling karakia: toki henahena. Te Whatahoro “at once replied that it was the name of an ancient Maori agricultural implement”; his brother in fact had just such a tool made of greenstone, “famous throughout the district of Wai-rarapa, and...a prized heirloom in the family” (Best, 1912, 21-22). Best had recorded the karakia where it was still efficacious, chanted at a tree felling to enact the physical and spiritual contact with one of Tane’s children, and Tane himself.²⁵⁹ In Te Whatahoro’s world, the toki (adze) had become a family heirloom, a sacred object, too valuable to be risked in the kind of work Tutakangahau employed his for. It was already a museum piece, symbolic of the exoticisation of traditional culture. Over the next ten years, this transfer of Māori knowledge into the textual museum would become a shared project for Best and his “remarkably intelligent and intellectual native”.

The publication of the *Man* article, one year after the arrival of Te Whatahoro’s material in Best’s hands is no coincidence: reading from the 1912 notebook, from that point and through to the end of 1913, a copious amount of material is attributed thus: “from Te Whatahoro”. Much of this concerns Io, and accounts for the references in the above article. There are notes on ethnographic techniques; discussions of the meaning of spiritual terms such as wairua, mauri and hau; the influence of the missionaries on Māori thought; and a number of important statements by Best on his attitude to Te Matorohanga - signs of a developing identification with the “last first class tohunga of the East Coast” (Best, 1912, 182). Best made a number of significant remarks about Christian influence on Te Whatahoro; on Te Whatahoro’s ideas about the missionaries; and his own view of Te Matorohanga. They further

²⁵⁹ “He ao pukapuka/he ao mahamaha/he toki henahena/he toki ta wahie/ka pa ki tua/ka pa ki waho/ka pa ki a Tane” (22). Also, “hengahenga”: see Williams *Dictionary of the Māori Language*, 46. Such karakia are notoriously difficult to translate precisely. In this context, “pukapuka” meaning lungs could have to do with the exertion; “mahamaha” the liver, or the emotions to do with involvement of the human from his world of light; an axe, and axe for firewood; touching all aspects of the tree and touching (affecting) the world of Tane, the forest god. In essence, the chant is in propitiation for taking one of Tane’s children, a *relative* of the axeman.

problematize claims of Io's pristine origins, revealing Best's influence on the shape of future Māori beliefs.

Many assertions about Io appearing in these 1912 notes from Te Whatahoro's material surface in the *Man* article, and later. As much the information itself, it is the reliability of the sources that matters - and what this reveals of Best's attitudes to his informants. He became over reliant on one man, Te Whatahoro Jury, trusting that his writings were Te Matorohanga's utterances, and that the older man had transmitted traditional knowledge. An example is his opinion that Te Matorohanga saw Māori as "originally monotheistic, evolving a polytheistic cult"; as a result of their prayers to Io going unheeded, they were forced to evolve "minor gods and demons, and sought their aid" (ibid, 182, 183). This "Maori explanation" given by Te Matorohanga is said to throw more light on the inner thoughts of the old time Maori in religious matters, and the higher plane of Maori mentality than anything that has been collected from this or any other primitive folk (ibid., 183).

This is a major leap from such evidence: Best had embraced a form of the degradationalist position, from a need to explain the persistence of the knowledge of a supreme being, alongside the worship of more efficacious minor gods by the majority. This is meant to support the theory of a secret priesthood: the "upper class of tohunga", whose knowledge descended to Te Matorohanga, and by extension, to Best. Because "Te Matorohanga was of the high rank of tohunga, he knew and had the mana and authority to repeat invocations to Io" – it was to Best, via Te Whatahoro, that the mantle of knowledge passed down.

The next step for Best to enlarge and extend this Māori high god was by the attribution of qualities that were important to him personally: that the Māori supreme being was superior to the Semitic model, as there were no threats of eternal damnation in the cult of Io (ibid., 186). "Kia marama!" he advises,

“There is no system of punishment in the future world” (ibid., 187).²⁶⁰ Best’s frequent insistence on this issue seems to derive from his own antagonism towards a particular Christian doctrine, and his desire to prove to the missionaries that they misunderstood and underestimated Māori spirituality.²⁶¹ In a now famous quote, he cites Te Whatahoro to the effect that if the

early missionaries had learned and studied the cult of Io, and had not so despised our religion, I think that that cult would have been incorporated with Christianity, and would now be part of the Bible (ibid., 186).

Best explains this by saying that his informant had not fully grasped missionary prejudice against all who did not rely on their “absurd and often degrading dogma”. This implies that Whatahoro had not fully grasped what he was up against, while Best had: Christianity was irrational, and its teachings were capable of dehumanising its audience. Best links his own deep antipathies with those of Māori. Whatahoro, he says, and many Māori distrusted the missionaries and “resent their actions and methods in the past” (ibid., 187). What he failed to analyse here are two key words: “despise” and “incorporated” that undergird his informant’s criticism.

Whether Best liked it or not, finding a measure of equality with the Pākehā who had dispossessed them was a key element of the Māori response to settlement, land loss, and marginalisation. Whatahoro is not asking here to be let out of te ao hurihuri, the Westernised world that was also his, culturally and genetically. Rather, he was seeking to come in, to enter on equal terms. There is an underlying plea for acceptance and respect, which is a key to the attraction of Io: a Māori high god like the god of the Pākehā. The idea of

²⁶⁰ Controversies about hell and future punishment were widespread in Protestant churches in New Zealand in the late nineteenth century – including two heresy trials within the Presbyterian church. See Clarke, Alison, “Heavenly Visions: Otago Colonists’ Concepts of the Afterlife”, *Journal of Religious History*, Vol. 30, No. 1, February 2006.

²⁶¹ It would be instructive to discover just how many of his father William Best’s Sunday bible readings made reference to eternal judgement, and the slaughter of Israel’s enemies.

incorporation, at the very least, is a further sign of Te Whatahoro's bicultural identity as a convert to Mormonism. By this time, he had been involved in that church for twenty years, fourteen of those as an active member (1886-1900). The concept of the incorporation of a new teaching and the addition of sacred writings to an orthodox canon is at the heart of Mormonism, as is the experience of rejection and misunderstanding at the hands of a hostile majority. This comment exemplifies syncretism as it makes a case for it: the wise missionary indigenises the faith, allowing the native convert to feel a measure of ownership and even a foreshadowing of the good news in their own religious tradition. Best is as prejudiced as the missionaries he despises, and in relying on Te Whatahoro and Te Matorohanga, has to fit their material, by degrees, to the Procrustean bed of his own pantheism.

While Best was free to chastise bigoted missionaries, who could never believe that "Maori had evolved...a Creator, of much superior attributes to the Jehovah of the Old Testament" (*ibid.*, 199), he could not escape the problem that these same bigots may well have influenced Māori, not least Te Whatahoro. As much as he was to deny that missionary influence had a bearing on the discovery and authenticity of the Io material, he was well aware of the possibility of unconscious influence on "borrowings". Discussing Whatahoro's material on the meaning of spiritual terms, he notes

Whatahoro gives 'toiora' as implying the spiritual welfare of man, and as the portion of the divine essence in man, that is the portion of the ichor of Io that is in every human being. This however, may be a borrowed idea, imbibed from Christianity, perhaps unconsciously as Whatahoro has, unfortunately, been in contact with that cult all his life (*ibid.*, 285).

This was a major admission for a researcher so dependent on this source: Māori were open to both the conscious and unconscious transmission of cultural concepts, and the unexamined nature of this type of borrowing opened to serious question claims of cultural purity and authenticity. Best, writing on the importance of information gathering techniques, admits as much in the same notebook: "for you can get any information from a native if

you put certain leading questions in a certain way". He noted further that a Māori informant would "often give what he thinks was the custom, or name, or method", and that repeated enquiries on the same matter over time often produced different answers (ibid., 265). "He taonga nui te tupato" was his conclusion (figuratively, "it pays to be very careful") (ibid.). He exhorted the use of the "critical faculty, the habit of probing into and seeing details, methodical conduct of enquiry and the power of assimilation" (ibid.). He seems to have taken leave of these qualities when it came to maintaining objective standards in the matter of Io, the Māori supreme being.²⁶² Some of the answer to this may lie in his identification with men like Te Matorohanga, in life and in death: his need for a surrogate religion, an attempt to blend the modern role of the anthropologist with the ancient calling of priest.

Relying on information from Te Whatahoro, Best constructed an image of the tohunga that had him debating with and besting the missionaries (ibid., 388-389). According to this material, the missionaries "tried to get him to discard teachings of the *whare wananga*, and its gods, including Io, but he steadfastly refused" (ibid., 388). Told this was a work of the devil, he responded, " 'Kai te pai. Ma Io tena; māna e titari.' Io will decide as to which is right. 'He hiku to nga mea katoa' ." (He is the source of all - created - things. My translation).²⁶³ There is no indication here that the discussion may have taken place in the context of Te Matorohanga's rejection of a teaching he had been involved with, as will become clearer in what follows. The discussion continued with a missionary accusing him of being in error, believing a religion that taught "all things possess a *wairua*". Best writes, "M. replied, 'Ki te kore te wairua o te atua ki roto, kaore tena mea e whiwhi i tona ahua' ". (If there is no spirit of god within, that thing will not be able possess any attributes. My translation). Te Matorohanga went on to observe that the *wairua* of any being or object was implanted when the *whatu* (eyes, core) were formed, and when a

²⁶² See also (384), on tohunga of the *Whare Wananga*: "Mohi Ruatapu...Nepia Pohuhu, and Ngatoro-i-rangi (who also knew it [the Io matter]) all 'fell from grace' and embraced Xtianity". Nepia Pohuhu was one of the Papawai tohunga in 1865.

²⁶³ Best translates some of the Māori in these notes, but not all. My translations are noted.

minister asked “ ‘where are the whatu of trees? M. ‘If the tree had no whatu, it could not bear fruit.’” Best comments that the “double meaning of whatu [was] evidently not grasped by the missionary”. Matorohanga responded that if “a tree had no whatu (core) it could not pihi (sprout)”. The missionary: “Where are whatu (eyes) and pihi (shoots) of a stone?” (My translation).

It is obvious from these exchanges that a feisty theological debate had been recorded; what follows is a key to understanding the old man’s background and stance, and the problem this creates for Best in his claim that “M. never embraced Christianity, and stuck to the teachings of the whare wananga, and its gods, until his death” (ibid., 389). Te Matorohanga’s trump card in the contest is to accuse the missionaries of not knowing or understanding their own Bible:

Kua mahue i a koe to pukapuka (where it says) Ko nga mea katoa, he ahua tona. He wairua to nga mea katoa, he ahua tona. He wairua to nga mea katoa, mehemea kaore i whakaae te atua e kore te rakau e whai hua, te aha ranei (ibid., 388-389).

You have neglected your own book (the Bible)...[where it says]...all things have their own likeness, their own spirit. All things have their own spirit, if the god [God] did not permit this, the tree could not bear fruit, nor any other [created thing] (my translation).

Te Matorohanga knew his Bible, specifically here, the book of Genesis: “And God made the beast of the earth after his kind” (1:24). He is using this knowledge to outflank the missionaries, and gain support for his argument on the existence of wairua in all things. He is appealing to biblical authority: in order to do this, he had to be familiar with the scriptures, and whether or not he ever “embraced Christianity”, his literacy was biblical. There is little ground to argue that such an influence could not possibly have had some influence on the Io teachings, and his views on spiritual matters in general. If Te Matorohanga was a tohunga of the old school, he was no less a pupil and a teacher of the new.

Yet to Best, Te Matorohanga was “*anathema maranatha* to missionaries...” (ibid., 389). This is a reference to the apostle Paul’s letter to the Christians in Corinth, “if any one does not love the Lord, let him be accursed. Maranatha” (1 Cor.16:22). This was addressed to a particular group of believers, and over time, came to be used as a curse reinforced by a prayer. “Maranatha”...come, Lord”, is now taken to be separate, and not a part of the curse. Best was employing it in its common application to an accursed person, especially one with an ambivalent relationship to the church.²⁶⁴ This also shows *his* familiarity with Christian culture, an inescapable fact of his background; both he and Te Matorohanga were enclosed in world views that might reject Christian orthodoxy, but in their separate ways, were shaped by its force. In Te Matorohanga, Best saw an ally in his dismissal of Christian claims, and could characterise him as he pleased: “from all accounts, [he] must have been a fine type of man, and infinitely wider minded than the missionaries, far more liberal in his views of religious matters”. This may have been so, but this reading seems to portray Te Matorohanga as the visible likeness of the invisible Best: a wished-for ancestor, an ally in his struggle with the missionaries to control the past and the future of Māori spirituality. Relationship is the key here: who Best most identified with in his partial alienation from urban middle-class European culture. The missionaries stand for a self-satisfied Pākehā smugness; Te Matorohanga is a symbol of rebellion and open-mindedness, an atavistic freedom.

Further evidence of Best’s identification with the older man can be seen in the way Best himself chose to die, repeating the ōhaki of the dying tohunga, as relayed to him by Te Whatahoro, in this notebook (1912). There is a full description of the old man’s death here: several of Te Matorohanga’s parting words are later attributed by Best’s biographer, Craig to the dying Pākehā when his time came. Whatahoro has Te Matorohanga say “ ‘Me he mea ko toku ra tenei, kia marama taku haere atu’ (If my time has come, let there be no impediment to my journey to the spirit world). ‘If my dealings with atua

²⁶⁴ See *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (Vine, 1939, 723-724).

maori (lesser gods) interferes with my going – me whakawatea e koe’ ”²⁶⁵ (ibid., 394). Craig recounts Best speaking to gathered friends on his deathbed, asking them to “heed the words of the master: ‘If my time has come, let there be no impediments to my journey to the spirit world. If my dealings with lesser gods hinder my going – me whakawatea e koe’ ” (Craig, 1964, 228). He continues: “like Te Matorohanga, Best was prepared to slip away peacefully, knowing his teaching would remain” (ibid.). The master referred to was Te Matorohanga.

This also derives from Te Whatahoro’s account of Te Matorohanga’s ōhaki (last instructions):

Te Whatahoro went to him and Matoro said, ‘Me whakakaha to waha ki toku tipuaki’, i.e., crown of head. Whata did so. Matoro said ‘Retain what I have taught. Deviate not. *Believe no other version.*’ (mine) That evening he passed quietly away at about 5pm. The whakakaha act was to cause his mana to pass to Te Whatahoro (Best, 1912, 395).

The same words are attributed to Best, when Craig writes

as a tohunga he was bound to see that his mana descended to his pupils, and he could think of no better way of conferring this prized possession than by reciting the injunction of his great teacher. ‘Retain what I have taught. Deviate not. Believe no other version and death will find you an aged man’ (Craig, 1964, ibid).

There is no specific reference in Craig to the source of these final remarks. He was a family member (a great nephew) treated like a son, and interviewed Best’s wife at some length in compiling the biography, and this record is the only account available. It is not possible to prove their accuracy - but rather, we should ask: why would Craig invent them?

This raises the question of what was Best doing reciting – or perhaps reading – the last words of a Māori tohunga who had died around fifty or sixty years

²⁶⁵ The translation is Best’s. Head has noted the inaccuracy of “If my time has come...to the spirit world”, writing that it is “essentially Xtian. What he’s saying is: ‘let me go in light = with a clear conscience’ ”. Personal correspondence, January 2006.

before him? What did Te Matorohanga mean to Best, that in the manner of a biblical patriarch, he conferred his mantle and his blessings on those present as if they were *believers*? To record his death in such detail in the 1912 Notebooks, and to have his words at hand twenty years later, suggests that Best saw himself as the heir apparent to Te Matorohanga's mana and knowledge: that what had passed to Te Whatahoro had passed to him.²⁶⁶ If Best saw him, as Craig claims, as "the last high priest of the Wharewananga", then by implication, as the recipient of the sacred teachings, Best was the inheritor of the knowledge (Craig, 1964, 228). His advocacy of the Io teachings and the concept of esoteric knowledge controlled by a higher grade of tohunga formed a continuity of vision, with him as a collector, interpreter and repository of such knowledge. This was the true kura huna, available only to those who knew and lived with Māori, achieving the level of linguistic fluency and cultural adaptation that would gain them entry into the inner sanctum. This compares closely with his account of the transfer of knowledge and power from Tutakangahau to himself, as seen in *Waikaremoana* (1897) during his first year living with and studying Tuhoe. Such knowledge conferred power: the need for a high level of autonomy seems at the heart of Best's refusal to allow the usual authorities to control his education, and also of his quarrel with the missionary approach to dealing with Māori. In his journey to tohunga status, Best did not simply seek an understanding of Maori religion and spirituality – he sought to manage its literary production, enhancing his own status as he did so. If he did indeed die as portrayed by Craig – exhorting believers not to deviate from the true teachings – the persona is as much that of a cult leader, as of a social scientist.

Conclusion.

When Best compiled the list of authorities for the bibliography of *Maori religion and mythology*, he noted of Tylor's remarks on supreme beings in primitive cultures: "Tohunga kept Io cult & perf. of its rituals in their own

²⁶⁶ Te Whatahoro had died in 1923.

hands in self aggrandisement, like all priesthoods".²⁶⁷ The production and the management of knowledge is the key to understanding Best's problematic relationship to his sources - and who could be trusted to transmit such material. He believed he had gained access to a pristine Māori thought world unsuspected by earlier settlers and scholars, and discounted by the missionaries who had been most deeply involved in the spiritual debates and exchanges of the nineteenth century. The above statement indicates that not even the higher class of *tohunga* could be trusted; that religious authorities were all alike corrupt. Māori themselves were not about to preserve their own traditions: "it remains for us to do it to the best of our ability" (Best, 1924 (1974), xiv). Only dedicated Pākehā anthropologists like himself remained, to analyse, edit and publish what was left of a vanished thought world and its cultural forms.

Māori, according to Best, had originated in an Aryan melting pot, that contained Semitic traces. They could be ranked in the upper levels of an evolutionary anthropology that stopped short of civilisation, due to their lack of literacy and dependence on Neolithic technology; while capable of abstract thought, they had no "intellectual culture". The abundance of personifications in their mythology located them in a mythopoetic, pre-scientific stage of human development, and so rendered them ideal for study – especially in the case of Tuhoe – as living examples of the "childhood of the human race". In spite of showing no real evidence of a written culture, they had managed to evolve a theistic religion that was superior in many respects to the Judeo-Christian model; this had been discovered late, and its traditions finally set down by a small number of informants.

These are the bare bones of what Best has to say concerning essential Māori being: minus any evidential examples and reduced to this scope, this seems a puny skeleton on which to hang a lifetime's collecting of material in the field. The body of his prodigious fieldwork, which preserved a huge number of

²⁶⁷ See Appendix on Best's sources for Māori religion for this chapter.

Māori accounts of material culture, requires another study entirely. Best's scholarship and his search for knowledge is important, however, as a serious search for indigenous knowledge: that of Māori themselves, and for Best as a first generation native New Zealander, for his own identity. In this, he is expressing an early sense of indigeniety, a project rooted in the land of his birth, and not looking elsewhere, despite his frequent appeals to external authorities. In searching for an *authentic* Māori being, Best was in part defining his own: in locating their origins, seeking out their mythologies and secrets, real or imagined, and trying to understand what it was to be Māori before Pākehā came, he was attempting at the same moment to describe and locate a new way of being for *himself* and his inheritors. If it was impossible for him to see Māori as Māori (and not as a version of Pākehā), he has also made it impossible for those coming after to be Pākehā here without reference to Māori: Māori self-definition, and Māori constructions of Pākehā themselves. As a frontier intellectual in a new land, Best anchored himself by assimilating Māori difference: both personally as part of his unique psyche, and culturally, into Western discursive modes. That this risky project did not simply record Māori myth and religion, but generated its own mythologies in the process, should not be a surprise. The "Maori according to Best" is in part the detailed observation of what he saw and what he was told; it is also the subjective meeting place of his own atavism and his need to belong. That said, the tenacity of this bush academic bequeathed the literary foundation of New Zealand anthropology; however shaky his theoretical bases now seem, Best's output remains indispensable.

Chapter 6. Tutakangahau on the record - historicizing a Māori informant.

Tutakangahau – Tamaikaimoana (hapū), Tuhoe (iwi), 1830 (?) – 1907.²⁶⁸

The problem addressed in this chapter revolves around the question: who was Tutakangahau? He appears in the ethnographer's writings as "Old Tu", Best's chief informant amongst Tuhoe, yet complete reliance cannot be placed on Best's accounts for a rounded portrait. Put bluntly, Best's vision of Tutakangahau is wrong: flawed and incomplete. Best sought "the old-time Māori" among modern Māori: late 19th century political and religious actors. "Old Tu" in fact lived a modern life, a new life, and this study will trace this in order to show not only where Best strayed from reality, but what his writing about Tutakangahau and other Māori says about *him*. The full picture of the man becomes a matter of agency (who holds the power to represent the self), and of alterity (in which frames of reference do we find the "other" portrayed). Best did not set out to write a biography of any individual Māori, preferring to deal in generalities, from tribal history to salvage anthropology. He operated both as an historian and as a preserver of vanishing traditions. Yet individual men do emerge from his writings, as we have seen in the preceding chapters, spoken for by another, their identities constructed and held for posterity. If history may be seen as a series of unauthorised biographies, this is neither novel nor immoral. In this colonial situation the literacy of the settlers and the inability of Māori to access and control their own representations written in English gave rise to accounts surviving in literature from the point-of-view of the incoming, and dominating culture. The problem is that during the colonial period, views of Māori were produced predominantly by Pākehā.

²⁶⁸ Tutakangahau appears in seven whakapapa tables in Volume Two of *Tuhoe*, and according to Best was related on his father's side (Tapuihina) to Ngati Rakei, Ngati Maru, Hape, Turanga and Tauke, and Tuhoe (or Urewera), Tuhoe Potiki and Ngati Apa; on his mother's side (Hinewai), to Te Tini o Toi, Te Hapuoneone and Ngai Te Kapo, and Ngati Whare (Best, 1996 (1925)).

What has become more obvious in recent years is that Māori themselves created an explosion of literary production during the mid to late-nineteenth century, using their new-found abilities to write and publish (see e.g. Curnow, Hopa, McRae, 2002). This rediscovery of Māori voices in letters, newspapers and other archives has been spurred by the Treaty settlement process, particularly in the research work of the Waitangi Tribunal and its public hearings. Beginning with Webster (1979), Sissons (1991), Binney (1979, 1995), and Ballara (1998); and most recently, Marr et al (2000), in new studies of the Tuhoe situation, and a series of Waitangi Tribunal reports on the Urewera claims, these voices have re-emerged from the archives of local and national government. The wider availability of nineteenth and early twentieth century Māori newspapers, both in libraries and online has also allowed a more ready access to the public, if not private utterances of historical actors such as Tutakangahau. It is this type of little known material which enables us to flesh out the portrait of a significant New Zealander, little known or recognised beyond his own people, Tuhoe. Yet even here, such voices are open and vulnerable to being overtaken by new interpretive impositions by such as myself: translators, editors, and researchers, producing the real possibility of fresh contextual distortions. The contemporary situation is that the emergence of historical Māori voices has raised a new problem: the quality of their representation.

The hypothesis then is that the *kōrero* (voices, stories) of men such as Tutakangakau have been so mediated through writers such as Best that a fresh examination of archival and published material is called for. This involves the risk of further misrepresentation, requiring new interlocutors to speak for and about the subject and their “reality”. Such a process also raises questions about the quality and understanding of evidence, and editorial choices about what matters in the life of a man like Tutakangakau. Sahlins, citing Bakhtin’s concept of *exotopy*,²⁶⁹ would argue that it takes an outsider to “see” the other culture: not rightly, or wrongly, but to give an external view

²⁶⁹ An external vantage on culture.

which cannot be gained from within, at the time: “It takes another culture to know another culture” (Sahlins, 2004, 5). We can agree that the outsider sees and knows differently, not being subject to inner constraints; the lasting value of such different viewpoints depends on who is looking.

What type of knowledge did Best’s externality confer, as compared with that of an insider such as Tutakangahau? Doubly external in space and time to Best, in taking another view of this man we inevitably complicate the picture – all at the risk of the cementing the Western takeover. The emic-etic dichotomy may well prove impossible to untangle, and we must remain aware of working from partial sources. At least the written record gives a measure of objectivity: it remains the same, in spite of the position of its interpreters.

The chief matter of understanding is the *exotopy* of the one who does the understanding – in time, space and culture – in relation to that which he wants to understand creatively (Bakhtin in Todorov) (Todorov, 1984, 109-110).

It is argued here that if more material is sought in the public record, a different view of Tutakangahau will emerge, and of Best’s methods and motives also. It is important to note that while this will be an attempt to get closer to Tutakangahau, care must be taken to avoid framing him in ways he would not have seen himself - but rather, to examine more carefully his experience as a cross-cultural figure, mediator and power broker.

The aim will be to present a foil and a balance to the kind of neo-romantic revisionist “victim history” (which so easily excises individuals, in a fresh exoticisation of the group), to more clearly portray Tutakangahau in his humanity, his strengths and weaknesses. We will try to get closer to his own view of himself, which requires us to avoid recolonising and reconstituting his reality. Complete reconstruction is impossible, but an attempt needs to be made, in the continual reassessment that should constitute an evolving

historiography. What kinds of agency (power) did Tutakangahau possess?²⁷⁰ He was certainly powerful and influential to have Best approach him and depend on him for so long; and confident in himself to seek out Pākehā like Best who belonged to Pākehā power. As a power broker, a Tuhoe war leader and chief, what compromises did he mediate, and what advantages did he seek for himself and his people? How did he come by his literacy, and how did he use it?

The methodology - and the solution - will be in the examination of the historical record to find evidence of Tutakangahau's presence, unmediated by Best. Letters, government records, speeches and tribunal reports etc, and Māori newspapers (in Māori), where his letters, containing his ideas and points-of-view, have slumbered unread. The aim will be to hold another "version" up against Best's generalised Māori, in order to view any tension that might emerge. Each phase of Tutakangahau's long and productive life will be examined, in the following sections: Christianity in the Urewera; war, Te Kooti and Ringatu; confiscation and land politics (resistance and co-operation); and the Urewera District Native Reserve and the National Park.

The section on Christianity in the Urewera will argue from the premise that Best failed to account for the missionary influence on his subjects, from fifty years prior to his arrival. He represents Tutakangahau as a neolithic survivor, a man whose cultural concepts were still pristine and untainted by the missionaries. He either ignores or - more unlikely - is ignorant of his informant's full history; the aim here will be to balance these omissions with an account of Tutakangahau's exposure to the missions and biblical literacy. The effects of the possibility of a new-found cultural subjectivity conferred by literacy (and offering a more objective viewpoint beyond the enclosure of a traditional culture) will be discussed in the chapter's conclusion.

²⁷⁰ Peter Clayworth has also addressed issues of Māori agency in anthropological networks in his recent thesis, "An indolent and chilly folk": the development of the "Moriory myth", PhD thesis in History, University of Otago, 2001.

With regard to wars with the settler forces and their Māori allies, Tuhoe involvement with the military and religious leader Te Kooti and his Ringatu faith, Best again fails to give full weight to his informant's engagement with modernity. Tutakangahau's relationship with the prophet of Ringatu, militarily, politically and spiritually, is evidence of such an engagement, and Māori religious response to the cultural forms of Pākehā religion. At the very least, this must have shaped his thinking about spirituality in post-traditional forms. Such religious, military and civil engagement destabilise notions of Tutakangahau's pristine thought world. This and the above section relate to the experiences of Te Matorohanga and Whatahoro Jury, as discussed in the previous chapter.

Tutakangahau's political engagement with the settler government, as a result of land confiscations from the late 1860s onwards began in 1871 with Te Whitu Tekau (The Seventy), an early example of local self-government in the Rohe Potae (Tuhoe traditional lands). It began a lifetime of local and national political activity, which saw him become a Commissioner in the Urewera District Native Reserve by 1896. We see almost nothing of this career in Best. In the economics of survival and preservation, and the politics of Tuhoe autonomy, Tutakangahau had to make difficult choices, such as the roading question. Roads brought prosperity and yet were Trojan horses for settler encroachment; wage labour was welcome, but not the prospect of the Native Land Court adjudicating on the ownership of adjacent lands. Schools, and improved communications were all part of the temptations of inclusion in the Pākehā polity. Pākehā power was a threat on the one hand, yet as a powerful man in Tuhoe society, Tutakangahau needed in some measure to belong to it, conflicting at times with loyalty to his own people.

His involvement in the establishment and operation of the Urewera District Native Reserve and the National Park, from 1896 onwards, gives another perspective on the man in his final years. The Reserve was part of Tuhoe's attempt to turn their geographical advantages into a form of self-government - but they were betrayed by degree. Those Tuhoe commissioners involved in

its operations - including Tutakangahau - were gradually sidelined by the Pākehā in charge, and what was intended by Tuhoe as a way of keeping the Native Land Court out of their territory became another instrument of dispossession. This was to a degree Tutakangahau's "last stand": the attempt to deal with Carroll and the Seddon government, and secure a Tuhoe bastion. The reserve was seen by the state as a tourism and mining resource, which when roaded, would tame the rebellious tendencies of Tuhoe, and bring them under the sway of civilisation. This final section also notes Best's role as ethnographer, while he worked on the roading project: he was a quartermaster there, and a secretary to the Commission on which Tutakangahau served. While on the one hand he was attempting to record the last vestiges of traditional Māori lifeways and beliefs, he was also a paid government servant, charged with bringing in the economic universe that would finally obliterate such a culture. As might have been expected, there was gradual erosion of Tuhoe influence and involvement in the Commission and eventually, in any real ability to share the governance of the Urewera.

Christianity in the Urewera.

The following discussion gathers up various strands of evidence of early Christian influence on Tuhoe in order to strengthen the contextual case for Tutakangahau's modernity. The intention is also to establish some measure of context for his life, as well as that life itself: that this man is emblematic of a significant period in their history. Tuhoe, an iwi (tribe) inhabiting some of the more rugged and remote areas of the northeast of New Zealand's North Island, were penetrated early by European ideas and goods. Christianity began arriving on the East Coast in the 1830s, brought by William Williams' catechists to Te Papa and Koutu in 1835 (Lyall, p151, from Webster [1979], cited in Dryden) (Dryden, 1987, 4). Webster writes of Tuhoe travelling to these stations to find out something of the new doctrine, returning to render their individual versions to members of their whānau and hapū (Webster, 1979, 90). Amongst those who quickly attained some biblical literacy was Tapui, Tutakangahau's father – a fact attested by William Colenso, when he

visited remote Toreatai, early in 1844 (Bagnall & Petersen, 1948, 173). By the early 1840s, Christian ideas and the first shoots of Tuhoe biblical literacy were omnipresent in the tiny hamlets Colenso visited. There was trade in goods and later, work outside the Urewera boundaries, and the importing of such significant taonga as whole bibles, along with guns and horses (“Tuhoe”) – see Best (1925, pp 557-564).²⁷¹ Later warfare with Pākehā in the 1860s, the land confiscations and subsequent political engagement in the abovementioned forums, were maturing processes in the relationship of Tuhoe to Pākehā, well prior to Best’s arrival in 1896. Tutakangahau was a product of these times: he was ten or twelve years old when he heard his father welcome Colenso with kōrero spiced by “scriptural allusions”²⁷² (Colenso, 1841, 173). He was a witness to and part of the massive changes wrought in Māori society, in the years 1830 to 1895. If Best had truly found pristine informants, they would have been men such as Tapui, or his father, Mokonui. Tutakangahau grew up with a literate Christian father and came to maturity in a hybrid world in which prestige (mana) was also to be found by gaining influence in the new. This was exactly what Tapui evidenced when he greeted Colenso in 1841: as much as anything else, he was telling the missionary, “I am just as powerful as you”. Tutakangahau would seek the same equality with Best.

While it is the aim of this analysis to look beyond Best’s construction of Tutakangahau’s identity, and his spiritual roots, it is important to first note that the ethnographer did provide some information about early Christian contacts with Tuhoe, and eyewitness accounts by Tutakangahau of Colenso’s visits and the debate amongst Tuhoe this provoked. His account in *Tuhoe* of Christian influences mainly concerns first contacts and early mission activity, with the contestable conclusion that by his own time, “the Tuhoe tribe have not very much use for Christianity”, the early teachings since degraded into “grossly shamanistic superstition” (Best, 1925, 561-564). While this glosses over the whole question of Te Kooti and Ringatu, there is much valuable

²⁷¹ Informants told Best the first horse obtained by Tuhoe from Turanga, prior to 1843, was eponymously graced with their name; they shortly thereafter traded pigs in Auckland for a stallion (Hinekura) (Best, 1925, 557).

²⁷² This incident will be more fully discussed in a later section on Colenso’s journeys.

material here, in relation to Tutakangahau and the impact of biblical literacy on Tuhoe culture.

Of much greater significance is where Best - citing Tutakangahau - gives an account of Tuhoe's reasons for finally embracing the Christian faith:

Some very peculiar reasons are given by these natives for their fathers' acceptance of Christianity. Tutaka said to me: "When the missionaries first came among us, we were not much inclined in favour of their religion, not until they showed us many wonderful things, which we attributed to the superior power of their god. When they explained the use of written language to us, we did not believe them, and made many tests of the same, getting them to write messages to one another. Then we sent one away some distance, and saw that this writing was effective, and carried messages to distant and unseen persons. Then we said: 'The god of the white man is more powerful than the Maori gods.' And so we embraced Christianity" (ibid., 562-563).

This almost certainly places Tutakangahau at or near the meetings around Ruātoki or Pupuaruhe at the time above. His use of "we" may mean he was told this, but it hardly seems likely if he saw Colenso when he visited in January 1842 and 1844.

What matters however, in terms of Best's later relationship with his informant, is the view given here that writing and literacy are seen as evidence of a god-like power: the medium is as powerful – if not more so, initially – than the message. It is this early exposure to literacy as the vehicle of Western power, grooming him for a previously impossible form of cultural objectivity, that makes Tutakangahau a likely candidate to act as an informant in later life. This will be discussed more fully later, but it is important to signal here that this encounter, fifty years before Best meets him, is a seismic paradigm shift in Tutakangahau's cultural bases. From that point on he was unable to live wholly enclosed in a traditional culture (which was already changing radically under the impact of modernity), enabled through literacy

to view himself and his world at more than one remove. The consequence of this manner of exposure to literacy is seen above, in Best's reporting of Tutakangahau's reaction: an embrace of Christianity that implied a subsequent demise of the Māori gods.

Best was well aware of the missionary influences on his closest informant, but chose to minimise or ignore their effect on him. There is little doubt that Tutakangahau himself told Best he had gained access to biblical literacy from the missionaries. His biographer Craig, writing in *Te Ao Hou*, cites Best on Tutakangahau: " 'Above all, he was thoroughly conversant with the modes of thought of the ancient Maori.' A learned man, he was taught to read and write by the missionaries when he was a child"²⁷³ (Craig, 1957, 9). Tutakangahau's knowledge is therefore twofold: ancient and modern. Best wants him for the former, but depends also on the latter; Tutaka wanted modernity, Best antiquity and in the course of their relationship, both consciously and unconsciously, they met these apparently contradictory needs.

Best goes on in *Tuhoe* to cite a "native account" (unsourced) of a fight at Toka-a-kuku: "the *atua* of the party that took the fort was Jesus Christ, and Taumata-a-kura was the priest. He had been a prisoner amongst Nga-puhi and, on his return here (to the East Coast), he introduced the new religion. Leaves were used for paper, and charred sticks for pens" (Best, 1925, 563). A Catholic priest called Fr Reine visited Ruatahuna around the time of Colenso's 1842 visit, and visited "a Tuhoe village on the Wai-kare stream, between Maunga-pohatu and the Whakatane River, where he seems to have taught the natives to read and write"²⁷⁴ (ibid.). The Rev. Preece established a mission at

²⁷³ Craig cites no sources, but was at this point working on the biography (published in 1964), for which he combed all the available sources (see his bibliography and appendices), and hand-copied vast numbers of Best's letters and diary entries.

²⁷⁴ Binney (2002) states that this priest is almost certainly Father Euloge Reignier (aka, Pere Rène), who was still active in the area around Waikaremoana up until March 1863. A number of other Catholic priests figured in the evangelisation of Tuhoe, and especially at Maungapohatu over various times: Fr Jean Lampila (Pa Rapira), 1844-

Te Whaiti in 1847, and Tuhoe carried stores for him from the coast. As mentioned earlier, Best concludes this brief survey of Tuhoe involvement with early missions by disparaging the degraded version of Christianity he perceived as existing by the time of his arrival in the mid-1890s. We can now turn to other accounts of these early contacts from witnesses such as Colenso in the early 1840s, through to C. Hunter Brown in 1862 attesting to the anger and disillusion of Tuhoe, at the gap between the “Ture” (law, Gospel) of God, and the ture of government, which was undermining the former.

Colenso’s Journeys:

William Colenso’s two missionary journeys through the Urewera (1841-1842, 1843-1844) are examined next, giving a picture of missionary activity going on around Tutakangahau from early adolescence to his maturity. Colenso was a missionary and printer, who landed in the Bay of Islands in 1834, and proceeded to learn the language, then print bible extracts and New Testaments in Māori. His facility in the language rapidly increased due to his driven and conscientious habits, and in spite of a bad stammer, he was “conversing competently” after six months. By the time he left for his first Urewera journey in 1841, Bagnall writes he was “a highly proficient Maori scholar” (Bagnall & Petersen, 1948, 45-46). His commentary on the events surrounding the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi (which he witnessed), is generally regarded as one of the more balanced surviving accounts.²⁷⁵ While by many accounted imperious and rigid in his personal dealings, as an explorer and observer in his generation, his writings are as vital as those of Richard Taylor and Edward Shortland. His account of what he found in the following journeys is an important piece of missionary ethnography (a concept Best was always to regard as deeply oxymoronic: Christians in his view were always unreliable narrators).

1849; Fr Delphine Moreau and his successor at Opotiki, Fr Louis Sègala, 1850 (42, 44-45).

²⁷⁵ See Orange, Claudia (1987), pp 35-77; Colenso (1890).

Colenso wrote detailed accounts in his Journals of the forms of Christian influence he found amongst Tuhoe between 1841 and 1844. (Colenso, 1980) He was a prodigious traveller, botanist and evangelist in this period, and while his purpose was conversion of Māori, his accounts of Māori society at this time are significant. What is notable about the following reports is how they typify what went on in Māori society in general over this period. They also bring to mind the situation in the early Church, described by the apostle Paul in his many letters to young churches in Asia Minor and Greece. There were some genuine conversions, often of whole communities; there were also objections by local religious authorities to the new influence; doctrinal disputes (Jews and Greeks in Paul's day, Catholic versus Anglican in Colenso's).²⁷⁶ There was an eye for material, educational and political advantage; a lack of scriptural material; the shortage of trained leaders and teachers; the development of heretical and syncretistic doctrines, often espoused by charismatic prophet figures; and the inevitable falling away over time of the once-converted. All of these developments can be found in the New Testament letters and histories; many are in evidence in the Māori communities of the Urewera during the 1840s. The impact of organised Christian evangelism has always produced changes that cannot be gainsayed by later analyses of its worth, cultural sensitivity, or implication in imperial projects through which it took the opportunity to advance (eg, the Pax Romana in Paul's day, or imperial British rule and colonial ventures, for Colenso). The point here is to approach what this evangelisation meant for Māori in general, and for Tuhoe and Tutakangahau in particular.²⁷⁷

²⁷⁶ News of Colenso's debates with Catholic missionaries may well have reached Tutakangahau's village - and of their display of crucifixes and religious medals.

²⁷⁷ Everywhere Colenso travelled, he found extensive Christian influence, little more than a year after the Treaty of Waitangi, which Tuhoe did not sign. If the Treaty was irrelevant to them then, the impact of the new teachings was not. Binney emphasises the importance of the desire for literacy in Māori, which the Anglicans offered; and also the hunger for baptism, and the taking of a new name thereby - a radical decision (Binney, 2002a, 52).

The following précis serves to lay a foundation showing the impossibility of any pristinity fifty years on from Best's arrival in 1895. The missionary's first Urewera journey ran from December 1841 into January 1842. Colenso, arriving at Kaupapa on the East Coast, assisted Williams for ten days prior to his expedition inland: he related to assembled "native chiefs the history of one of the prophets....Elijah, to which they listened with breathless attention" (Bagnall & Petersen, 1948, 113). He paid off the bearers from the early part of his journey with New Testaments. En route from Te Reinga to Waikaremoana, he stopped at Whataroa, and was welcomed by Isaac, a native teacher (ie, Māori evangelist), where he learnt that a Roman Catholic priest was just ahead of him, following a similar itinerary. He prepared himself for the inevitable controversy (ibid., 115). He journeyed to Onepoto, where the *pikopo* (Catholic) party was camped in the village; he had to camp outside on Christmas Eve, 1841. A violent debate with Fr Baty the Catholic priest followed, as they "expounded and argued inside a ring of impassive but doubtless somewhat bewildered natives" (ibid., 116). He crossed the lake and at a small (unnamed) village discovered a few Māori who could read, and gave them books. They then struck out for Ruatahuna. This first journey had revealed that by 1841 there was already a widespread Christian influence amongst Tuhoe: native evangelism, apostolic visitation, literature distribution, literacy and doctrinal dispute.²⁷⁸

His second Urewera journey began in December, 1843. At Te Matai, on December 18th, they found Paul, "a native teacher...[that is] a Christian". He also met a party from Waikaremoana on the way to be baptised by Williams – including some he had met on his first visit, who had not seen a missionary since (ibid., 169). On the 28th, he arrived at Te Takapau, near the "Ruatahuna hill", and the news brought in neighbouring villagers, "some of them already (professing) Christianity, and those who were able to read were persistent in their demands for books" (ibid., 171). At nearby Oputao, a chapel had been

²⁷⁸ At Ruatahuna, 29th December, 1841, Colenso saw well-worn copies of New Testaments he had printed, and noted "several (Māori) among them had taught *themselves* to read". His emphasis (Colenso, 1841, 529).

built since Colenso's previous visit. He went on to the palisade pa of Te Ahikereru, near Te Whaiti, and held a service at the chief's house before a gathering of sixty-five locals. Colenso "preached, catechized and taught" all day, in part because of the intense interest in Protestant and Catholic differences. (ibid., 171). At Tututarata, he debated with an elderly chief whose adherence to the old ways had meant the small group of village Christians were being persecuted. He sought out others who had left when the antagonistic chief had arrived, and taught on the banks of the Whirinaki; he was later invited to return to Tututarata, where a pig was slain for a feast. He heard of Māori desires to "embrace Christianity", of their wanting a missionary to come and live amongst them. (ibid., 172). Early in 1844, he visited "remote villages lying at the base of Maungapohatu, the sacred mountain of the Tuhoe people, where the traditionally warlike Tama-kai-moana clan had its home" (ibid., 173). He climbed the Te Wharau range, and at a small kainga of "twelve souls" the hospitable villagers reveal "they (are) *mihinare* and (account) themselves rich in the possession of a few books, the contents of which were expounded by one of their number who could read"²⁷⁹ (ibid.). Further on at Toreaatai, they were greeted "with ceremony, their chief Tapui delivering an oration of welcome interspersed with scriptural texts and allusions" (ibid.).

This is a crucial piece of information: Tapui, or Tapui-hina, was Tutakangahau's father. It was at this time, almost certainly, that Tutakangahau would first have seen Colenso. As a young child, or perhaps an early teenager, Best's principal informant was not only present at the arrival of Christianity in his village and the local district - prior to this visit of Colenso - but had a father who was to some degree already literate, and able to deploy biblical texts in *whaikōrero* (oratory). The use of proverbs in oratory

²⁷⁹ The Rev Thomas Chapman – who visited nearby Oputao and Ahikereru in May 1845 - was struck by the numbers who had taught themselves to read (see: *The Missionary Register*, 1847, 218, cited in Parr) (Parr, 1963, 219). Binney says his observations resemble those of New Zealand mission contemporaries, "that early Māori literacy was substantially self-taught" (Binney, 2002a, 56). Colenso counted nine readers at Toreaatai, a village long since vanished.

was standard practice: it seems that Tapui had simply drawn from this new source, to welcome the missionary - the very man who had printed the texts from which he was quoting. This phenomenon was occurring in the mid-1840s: Tapui was a man born into, or close to the enclosed pre-European culture, and was fully formed by traditional Māori society. The same cannot be said for his son: Tutakangahau was exposed to Christian literacy during the formative years of adolescence. This was not simply a proficiency in reading and writing, but an engagement to the thought world of Pākehā power, and a challenge to the integrity and autonomy of Māori culture. Tutakangahau was shaped by a literate modernity in his youth and was a mature man of at least sixty-five years when Best met him.

On Colenso's return to Marureangi, he encountered several mountain villages with professing Christians; and at nearby services, "found there was much to correct in the teaching of the self-appointed native teachers, who, through ignorance and lack of guidance, expounded doctrine largely of their own devising" (ibid., 174). (This was to prove a fertile seedbed - given later government betrayals of Māori citizenship - for the rise of indigenous, syncretistic millennialism). Travelling out of the mountains down the Whakatane River, nearing Ngamahanga, their guide shouted out "he mihinare" - and the locals turned out in force, "Bible in hand, thereby signifying they were Protestant Christians"²⁸⁰ (ibid.). At Te Pukurua near the Waimana River, they set up camp and visited surrounding villages, meeting a disappointed party of baptismal candidates returning from a three week wait at Opotiki, for Kissling and Wilson to arrive and baptise them" (ibid.). There is a strong likelihood that Tapui, already in prior possession of Colenso's bible portions, had undergone baptism.

²⁸⁰ Ensign Best recorded in his Journal (17th July, 1842) seeing rival villages at Otumoetai, Tauranga, competing to display their Catholic or Protestant allegiances, carrying out bibles or crosses accordingly, and holding their services within sight of one another (Best & Taylor, 1966, 372). Books were also valued for their own sake, as Turner notes - they were talismen of Pākehā power (Turner, 1986, 152).

As with the first journey, all the elements of a significant Christian influence continued to pervade Tuhoe in 1845. Young men like Tutakangahau could not fail to have been affected by this, whether or not they professed the faith. Christianity and modernity were part of the same package, and once they had entered the bloodstream of Māori society – especially Māori thinking about the nature of the world – there was no way back to the old world, or any chance of unmediated contact with pre-Pākehā thought forms and social structures. Within ten years, the deflation of early missionary hopes through the effects of settler land hunger saw the closure of Preece's station at Te Ahikereru in 1855. As the riri Pākehā, the settler war machine, encroached on Tuhoe lands after the 1860s wars, there were to be no more missionary outposts built in the Urewera until the Rev Laughton came to Ruatahuna in 1917, a year before the prophet Rua was released from prison.

Within a twenty-year period of Colenso's arrival and with the wars of the 1860s, disillusionment with the missionaries and the settler government grew, a process in which Tutakangahau became deeply involved. In 1862, the resident agent at Wairoa, C. Hunter Brown, journeyed through Tuhoe territory, sounding them out on Governor Grey's proposed local runanga scheme, while assessing their numbers and likely military strength. He did not go to Maungapohatu, but Mohi, the chief there travelled to meet him and was conciliatory. Brown noted their collective distrust of the missionaries and the Government: "Yours is a land-taking and man-destroying Church... You have deserted the faith, and set up the Queen as your God!" (Brown, 1862, 28). Binney notes two main intellectual influences in the Urewera at this time: a Catholic-inspired "politics of neutrality" and the example of the Kingitanga (Binney, 2002a, 69-71). Brown, informed by his translator Fulloon,²⁸¹ wrote of a state of disillusion: "the present political disposition of the Urewera may be

²⁸¹ James Te Mautaranui Fulloon, also an interpreter for Grey and an informant for the Governor. His mother was Koka Te Waha, and he was a cousin to the only Tuhoe-related accused in the murder of the missionary Volkner in 1865 (Wepiha, executed in 1866). Fulloon was killed on the schooner *Kate*, 22 July 1865, in the harbour at Whakatane, by Ngati Awa and the Taranaki Pai Marire (Binney, 2002a, 96).

summed up as intense suspicion and distrust of the Pakeha; soreness for the past wrongs of the race...they still dreaded something behind [the Governor's new system], still feared a trap" (Brown, *ibid.*). He recorded a qualified assent to trying the new proposals (which never eventuated, superseded by the Native Land Court in 1865). He gave a telling example of the gap between missionary hope and secular behaviour:

Sad confusion exists in the minds of some of the most thinking men in this valley (near Tuapuku). Between the 'ture' as they call the Gospel or law of God, and the 'ture' as they also call the law of men. They appear greatly to fear lest by the second we should be meaning to undermine the first. It is a pity that in general conversation they should use 'ture' for either almost indiscriminately (Brown, 1862, 30).

Brown thought that Māori had not yet developed a sophisticated sense of the way the Christian religion was able to function, in a world still plagued with the consequences of human sin. Yet if he saw them as theologically naïve, he attributed their well-founded distrust of the government to the sharp political awareness of thinking men. It was in this atmosphere of distrust and disillusion that Tutakangahau was to mature, and eventually, in the early 1870s, to join forces with Te Kooti, absorbing the teachings derived by the prophet and guerrilla leader who founded a biblically based, indigenous religion that became known as Ringatu, "the upraised hand". He would certainly have had to face the conflict Brown signals: that the settler government could split the civil and religious laws in their actions, something inconceivable in a traditional society, ruled by immediate and terrible consequences for the breach of tapu.

War, Te Kooti and Ringatu.

Tutakangahau's involvement with the prophet of Ringatu, militarily, politically and spiritually, will provide further evidence of his engagement with modernity and Christianity, shaping his thinking about spirituality in

post-traditional forms. In order to appreciate what led to this, it is important to trace his career up until the government military incursions into the Urewera. Until Tutakangahau's letters to government officials begin to appear in the public record, post-1870, we are still dependent on Best and *Tuhoe* for biographical details. In recording mid-19th century tribal warfare with Tuhoe's enemies, he writes that between 1850 and 1852, Tutakangahau faced Ngati-maru with Tuhoe at Te Takatakanga, near Whirinaki, with conflict averted through the intervention of the Rev Preece. Both Te Puia Nuku and Tutakangahau were survivors of the Tuhoe contingent – the latter being around twenty years of age (Best, 1925, 474-478). Following Best's earlier portrayal of Tutakangahau as a Christian convert, he next appears as a warrior, and further accounts of his exploits occur in *Tuhoe*.

In 1863, according to Best, Ngati Kahungunu built a pa at Tukurangi, in an attempt to "seize Wai-kare Moana" during the war between Māori and Pākehā²⁸² (ibid., 517). Tutakangahau described to Best a Tuhoe war party that went down there to remove them, and how bloodshed was avoided by the intervention of the "chiefs and catechists and Tamehana of Ngati-Kahungunu". Before leaving, they built a pa at Te Tukutuku-o-heihei, the land being subsequently awarded to them "by the Native Land Court, and we sold it to the Government". What Best does not record is that the subsequent Tuhoe and Ngati Ruapani agreement to sell in 1875 was a result of threatened confiscation if they did not: either "no money and no reserves, or some money and small reserves"²⁸³ (Binney, 2002a, 315). Tutakangahau was one of sixty signatories to this forced sale.

By 1864, there was open warfare in the Waikato: Tuhoe sent a small party to support Ngati Maniapoto at Orakau. Best gives an extensive account of the Tuhoe involvement with Waikato in *Tuhoe*, based on the account of a survivor,

²⁸² Best habitually breaks Māori words syllabically eg., "Wai-kare Moana", which is reproduced in all direct quotes.

²⁸³ Binney cites Napier Land Court minute books (MB 4, p94) regarding this incident, and the later testimony of Eria Raukura (1917), Wairoa MB 29, p47 (ibid, 315).

Paitini (Best, 1925, 566-578). Some Tuhoe reasoned that fighting the Europeans there might prevent the prospect of fighting them on their own soil - the conflict in Waikato would surely come to them. Others - including the chief Te Ahoaho - said "My idea is this - Give heed to it, O Tuhoe!

Tauwharautia a Mātātua – [Let Mātātua be sheltered]. Leave it, secure from harm, in the shed" (ibid., 566). Paitini told Best that the ancestral canoe Mātātua represented their tribal lands, and the speaker was arguing for home defence, not expeditions far away. It seems that Tutakangahau shared this point of view: in a footnote, Best cites his comment on this debate amongst Tuhoe, about supporting Rewi Maniapoto.²⁸⁴ "All Tuhoe met at O-putao to discuss the Waikato war. The Rua-toki and Wai-mana clans decided not to go. Those of Rua-tahuna, Te Whaiti and Wai-kare Moana decided to send a contingent. The majority said: 'Let Mātātua be sheltered.' The fire [of war] is burning the island" (ibid., 567). It is certain Tutakangahau did not wish to be burnt at that point, and Best further supports the fact that he did not go, by naming the three Orakau survivors as at January 1907, several months before Tutakangahau died (ibid., 578).

By the age of thirty Tutakangahau was fully involved in warfare, the politics of survival, and the strategic debate on how to confront the government. "Kia tāwharautia a Mātaatua" (let Mātaatua be sheltered) was at the core of debate then, and later: how could Tuhoe best protect their lands from inevitable Pakehā incursions, by settler and military? Between 1865 and 1867, the stakes were raised for Tuhoe after the murder of the Rev Volkner in Opotiki in March 1865 and the resulting Bay of Plenty confiscations. The war was soon extended to Waikaremoana, the pretext being the search for those implicated in the deaths of Volkner and Fulloon. The confiscations of Tuhoe lands, following their association with the Taranaki Pai Marire (or Hauhau) rebels,

²⁸⁴ Tuhoe were related to Waikato, through Tuhoe Potiki's fourth wife, Hine Te Ata. (Best, 211). Gilbert Mair told James Cowan in 1920 that he understood Rewi himself had gone to recruit Tuhoe support in 1864 (Cowan Papers 0039:0041A, ATL). There was also a pact between Tuhoe and Waikato dating back to the 1820s, and the tying of Maungapohatu to Tongariro at Pukawa in 1856 meant Tuhoe also had an obligation, via Tuwharetoa's support of Maniapoto (Binney, 2002a, 79-80).

sowed the seeds of Tutakangahau's political engagement after the military struggles with the settler government were eventually lost. In the years 1868 to 1869, the relationship between Tuhoe and the prophet and guerrilla leader Te Kooti began in earnest. After the escape of Te Kooti and his party from the Chathams in 1868, some Tuhoe, including Te Waru and Nama joined him. The conjunction of his religious visions and a willingness to fight the government that had unjustly imprisoned him presented Tuhoe with a charismatic leader wronged by the same Pākehā who had taken much of their best lands.

At a point around this time, Tutakangahau also joined with them. There was no sudden or unanimous support for Te Kooti: Tuhoe had not yet allowed him to proceed past Puketapu and thus enter the Urewera proper, but he was permitted to operate from there. His forces were defeated at NgaTapa on January 6th 1869, and Best records the details of Tutakangahau's involvement in the battle with Major Wahawaha's Ngati Porou fighters (*ibid.*, 605 ff). Tutakangahau's son, Ahukata, was killed in the battle and he himself had a narrow escape. He had proved unwilling to confront the settler government at Orakau, but joined in the resistance Te Kooti was offering. This was not simply was a political or military decision, yet Best does not seem to ask why Tuhoe were willing to join the "Hauhau ranks".²⁸⁵ Pai Marire military activity had originated in a spiritual movement led by the prophet Te Ua Haumene (the name means 'good and peaceful'). His followers eventually turned spiritual warfare into material manifestations - and Te Kooti was the inheritor of such a complex phenomenon, whereby Māori answered the challenges of modernity with two of European cultures' most potent offerings: the word of God and the gun.

²⁸⁵ He notes that one of the Tuhoe dead was Kenana, a relative of Tutakangahau and father of Rua Kenana. He cannot resist a sarcastic forward leap in the narrative, "Rua, or Rua-tapu-nui, the New Messiah of the Tuhoe tribe in this year of 1906, he who is to drive the Europeans from New Zealand" (*ibid.*, 606). From the whakapapa given on this page, the elder Kenana was Tutakangahau's second cousin, placing Rua in a teina position to the older man, who later joined Rua's movement.

In February 1869, Te Kooti was invited to Maungapohatu, where senior Tuhoe such as Te Whenuanui and Paerau gave him their support. In March, at Tāwhana, he sealed a pact with all the major Tuhoe leaders, except for Tamaikoha. Tutakangahau is included by Akuhata Te Kaha in the ranks of “the chiefs of Tuhoe”, with whom Te Kooti “entered into a covenant”, to be “under his guidance”, and to give over a piece of land.²⁸⁶ The aim of the campaign that followed was to recover Tuhoe land, under God’s direction (i.e. according to the Law of God) in partnership with Te Kooti. He took Tuhoe as his people and the covenant was made: “Ko koe hoki te iwi o te kawenata.” (you are a covenant people). This Mosaic utterance is evidence of the religious nature of his leadership and of those Tuhoe - some already Christian, like Tutakangahau - who were not seeking another doomed military alliance, but some form of deliverance. This is the first indication of Tutakangahau’s seniority and his bonded relationship to Te Kooti.²⁸⁷

In May of 1869, the military invasion of Urewera began in earnest. Col Whitmore and Col St John entered the Urewera and employed a “scorched earth” policy, devastating Tuhoe food stocks. After initial successes in recovering their northern Bay of Plenty lands in conjunction with Te Kooti’s forces, some Tuhoe decided he was too dangerous to harbour within their rohe, and he marched to Taupo, taking Tuhoe supporters (June, 1869). It is almost certain that one of the leaders who went with him was Tutakangahau: a group of twelve Tuhoe leaders were with Te Kooti on July 22nd, when he met with Rewi Maniapoto at Tokangamutu, urging Rewi’s support. They were with him at the siege of Te Porere on October 4th, and by February 7th, his force of over three hundred had unexpectedly appeared at Ohinemutu amongst Te Arawa. Mair later wrote that the Arawa chiefs had received a letter “signed by Te Whenuanui...and Tutakangahau, asking them to let the

²⁸⁶ Minute Books, Māori Land Court, Whakatane, 6 May 1897, p190, microfilm (cited in Binney, 2002: 193).

²⁸⁷ Best records Paitini’s testimony that Tutakangahau’s wife was among those who took part in the raid on Mohaka in April: “Another person who took part in the bloody work was Kura-wha, wife of Tutakangahau, a woman of great size and amazing muscular strength, whose fame as wrestler still lives. She shouldered a rifle and took part in the fighting like a savage Amazon” (Best, 1925, 637).

party through” (Binney, 2002a, 207). In a dash to the safety of the Urewera, Te Kooti and Tuhoe reached Ahikereru on February 8th.²⁸⁸

By mid-1870, Te Kooti was at Waioeka in the Bay of Plenty, outside of the Urewera, as war weariness, starvation and disease, forced Tuhoe leaders into suing for peace. Government policies were aimed at clearing them from within the mountains, and concentrating the survivors in coastal reserves. Paerau surrendered in October 1870, and in December, he and Te Whenuanui met with Ormond in Napier, to discuss peace terms (ibid., 232-234). According to Best, Tutakangahau was with them, on “a peace mission” (Best, 1925, 653). Early the following year, Ropata and Porter were engaged in fortifying Ruatahuna, and visited Maungapohatu. Captain Porter’s diary records some of the speeches, and gives a clear picture of the desperate situation Tuhoe now found themselves in: unable to trust the government or other Māori, and uncertain whether to completely reject Te Kooti, with whom they had made a covenant. Several chiefs spoke, and all according to Captain Porter expressed “perpetual hatred to the Pakeha”, saying:

‘Welcome Ropata, for your own sake we welcome you, although you serve the Kawana, from whom we have suffered many wrongs. You may be acting right, but also may be deceived. You cannot tell what is hidden in the heart. We are willing to accept the *rongo pai*, but we will remain in our kaingas, lest, when all the wild cows are collected by the tame ones, you the Kawana should turn and destroy all, tame and wild. Te Kooti is not here. Seek him, and if you find him, spare (him) as you spare us. We are cautious of the action of the Government...’ . Ropata replied, ‘ I should not serve the Government as I do if I thought there was an after intention.’²⁸⁹

Tutakangahau is not recorded as being present, but this excerpt gives a telling picture of the situation Tuhoe faced, and of thoughts and feelings he no doubt would have shared.

²⁸⁸ Mair to Cowan (cited in Binney: 2002), ‘Explanatory Notes re Te Kooti’s Trial, 7 February 1870’, 6 June 1928, MS Papers 0039-0006 ATL.

²⁸⁹ Enclosure 26, AJHR 1871 F-No 1, p16, Friday 19th February, Maungapohatu. T W Porter, Captain and Adjutant. True Extract.

During the years 1871 and 1872, the government adopted a policy of “pacifying the Urewera”, using what has latterly become known as the “strategic hamlet” concept.²⁹⁰ Tuhoe had been placed in a difficult position: to show their support of the government by helping them capture Te Kooti, or back away from their covenanted support of the fugitive leader. Many had relatives who were followers, fighting with him, and others had family he had kidnapped as insurance. Even Wahawaha’s Ngati Porou fighters were not averse - as evidenced by the repeated occurrence of “premature” shots - to warning this elusive figure. The ultimate betrayal for Tuhoe, however, was when Wahawaha occupied Maungapohatu and Ruatahuna in October-November 1871, turning both into government outposts. This was seen as conquest and occupation, and not something Tuhoe had ever agreed to. Wahawaha named the Maungapohatu redoubt Kohi-tau (“gather the years”, a reference to the length of his pursuit of Te Kooti); Ruatahuna became Kohi-marama (“gather the months”, his closing in on the quarry) (Cowan, 1983, 453-454). Tuhoe in the latter district, who had fled the approach of Ropata, were persuaded by Tamaikoha to assemble for a hui, which according to Cowan, “established friendly relations (between Ngati Porou and the Urewera) which were never broken. All the chiefs of the Urewera or Tuhoe were now at Ruatahuna; (including) ...Tutakangahau...” (ibid.). This blithe optimism is not supported by Best, however, when he states Tuhoe resented the Ruatahuna redoubt so much, they cooperated in capturing the wanted men “in order to get rid of the hated Ngati-Porou” (Best, 1925, 662). This has a more authentic ring, but as for Te Kooti, ambivalence would prevail. After Kereopa’s capture and Te Kooti’s flight to the Waikato, he was chased “by Te Whenua-nui and others of Tuhoe...in order to get their own relatives” (ibid.). Care for their own and a deep distrust of the government now became the over-riding Tuhoe imperatives: “They set up a carved post by the roadside, on

²⁹⁰ As used by the Americans and South Vietnamese, during the Vietnam War in the late 1960s and the 1970s: the idea was to site armed camps amongst the peasants, isolating them from the influence of the Viet Cong and the North Vietnamese and forcing them to take an active role in the civil war.

the confiscation boundary at Rua-toki - *hai arai i te pakeha me āna mahi* – to keep off the white man and his works”²⁹¹ (ibid., 665).

The next stage of Tuhoe’s relationship with Te Kooti was the compact made by them with the government, that authority be given back to the Urewera chiefs – avoiding expensive military outposts – if they cooperated in capturing the elusive leader, or removing him from their boundaries. Te Purewa, Tutakangahau’s senior at Maungapohatu had written on this matter to Ormond in November 1871, and Ormond had replied, “This word of yours is accepted...What is meant is that goodwill shall exist between your people & the Govt. & that Kooti and other evilly disposed people shall be given up.”²⁹² Ormond had also proposed to the chief (Te) Makarini in a letter on November 20th that a road be constructed from Wairoa, via Waikaremoana to Ruatahuna – the work going to Makarini’s people - and a mail service begun. In this early probe was contained the strategy that would eventually open up the Urewera, where costly military conquest and subjugation was a less favoured option. Many Tuhoe would resist the road, right up until the time Best arrived in 1895, but the attraction of paid employment, and its demonstration of a working link with the government, was ultimately an effective Trojan horse, weakening Tuhoe resistance to European penetration (Binney, 2002a, 262). Orderlies who carried the mail were attached to the respective chiefs, and provided a regular income. Tutakangahau himself was involved until as late as 1906, organising the carriage of the Ruatahuna mail from Maungapohatu to Te Whaiti.²⁹³

When Te Kooti physically left the Urewera, his influence did not cease, with gradually establishment of what became the Ringatu faith in its borders. His elusiveness had conferred upon him a charisma the government was incapable of diminishing. In exile amongst Maniapoto, he entered the second

²⁹¹ Best’s macronisation of the Māori - therefore, not corrected.

²⁹² Ormond to Te Purewa, 20 November 1871, Agent General Government, Hawke’s Bay, 4/8, Supporting Papers, p98. Cited in Binney, 2002, 259-260.

²⁹³ See Crown Law letters, MA4/104 – 417. I have not been able to establish when Tutakangahau first became involved in the paid carriage of mail.

stage of his self-mythologising, to return after 1883 as the pardoned prophet.²⁹⁴ In the ten years of his absence from Tuhoe, his influence grew as his doctrines and practice were carried to all who would listen by his converts. There was little hope of denting his mana among the Māori majority who felt betrayed by both church and state. Visitors streamed into his base at Te Kuiti, some for healing prayer, and others to learn his newly forged faith, which spread widely, helped by Te Kooti's letter-writing activities, to communities from Tarawera to Te Whaiti (Binney, 1995, 268-311).

In Tutakangahau's case, Hetaraka Te Wakaunua (no friend of Te Kooti) had noted the prophet's influence amongst Ngati Huri a good ten years earlier. Writing of the Maungapohatu hapu to Ormond and Russell in December 1873, he stated, "Kia mohio korua kaore he tangata o konei e whakahaere ana i nga ture a te Kawanatanga, kore rawa atu kia kotahi - you both should be aware nobody hereabouts is keeping to the laws of the Government, not a single one"²⁹⁵ (my translation). A number of missionaries also were clear-eyed about the spread of an indigenised Christianity controlled by Māori, based in Old Testament metaphors of a people chosen and persecuted, exiled tribes, warrior kings and prophets, and tending to exclude the suffering Christ. Thomas Grace, visiting Opotiki in 1877 observed that "Colonization, war, Confiscation...have followed each other in quick succession"; the expectations raised by the Treaty of Waitangi were dashed, and missionaries were seen as complicit in a global scheme to divest Māori of their lands. He saw that Māori had assumed "the entire management of their own spiritual affairs", looking upon people like him "with distrust and suspicion". They were not going back "to Heathenism", but instead were forging their own form of biblical faith (Grace, 1877, 285-286). Through his involvement with Te Kooti, and his early conversion, Tutakangahau was deeply involved in this process.

²⁹⁴ He opened the Ringatu meeting-house of Tuhoe, Eripitana, at Te Whaiti, on January 1st, 1883.

²⁹⁵ Letters to above and McLean, 4 December 1873, Agent of the General Government, Hawkes Bay HB2/2, National Archives. Cited in Binney, 2002: 294.

Bishop Leonard Williams, in December of the same year, accompanied his replacement, Bishop Stuart, on a diocesan expedition through the Bay of Plenty, Taupo and including the Urewera. He noted the sway of Te Kooti's influence, especially amongst Tuhoe, where "the notion...that the missionaries had acted a deceitful part towards them" had taken a "firm hold" – and as a result, they had "adopted Te Kooti's form of worship" (Williams, 1932, 79). He singled out Ruatahuna and Maungapohatu as active centres, and went on to describe in detail these practices in a whānau at Tawhana who offered them hospitality. His observations of their zeal in the promptness of their karakia were matched by compliments as to the civility of the welcome – a "genuine old-fashioned Māori hospitality" – and the reverent manner of the Old Testament prayers. His only cavil was the New Testament vacuum in this religion, of their neglecting to mention "the love of God...in Jesus Christ"²⁹⁶ (ibid., 80). Williams was clearly aware of the mistakes made by the missionaries, their cost to Māori and the welfare of the hāhi Mihinare.²⁹⁷ His singling out of Maungapohatu as an active centre of "Te Kooti's form of worship" places Tutakangahau at the heart of this development in his own hapū, Tamakaimoana.

These contemporary accounts make plain the religious milieu in which Tutakangahau found himself, an early adherent of what later became known as Ringatu.²⁹⁸ As a former fighting companion of the prophet, he would accompany him on his return visits to the Urewera. Religion and the temporal realm – if such a distinction can be made in relation to Māori society at the

²⁹⁶ This view of an evolving Ringatu liturgy has been disputed by Greenwood, when he writes that there was a significant New Testament component in the karakia – which initially were all recited from memory, never read. Bibles were treated as exceedingly tapu (Greenwood, 1942, 35-36, 58).

²⁹⁷ In the appendix, he helpfully includes a letter by an Opotiki storekeeper, one S A Levy, concerning the arrival of Patara on February 25th. Levy – a Jew – went to visit Patara, "who seemed much very much pleased, mentioning at the same time that he was very glad that I was a Jew, he being very fond of them, giving as his reason that the Jews were once a very grand people, but were now reduced to a very small one through the persecutions they had gone through, the Maoris believing themselves to be undergoing the same" (Williams, 91).

²⁹⁸ What Brabant calls "Te Kooti's *karakia*", and what later became known as Ringatu was not necessarily so called by Tutakangahau and his co-religionists at this time.

time in question - were interwoven, as evidenced by “Te Kooti’s *karakia*” being the form of religious service used at a March 1874 gathering of Te Whitu Tekau (Tutakangahau was a member). Binney cites Herbert Brabant, the resident magistrate at Opotiki who was present at the meeting. (Binney, 2002a, 321) His comments are worth quoting:

I remarked that, at the Uriwera meeting at Ruatahuna, one of the Ngatihuri, named Paumata, conducted a service, morning and evening, according to what is called ‘Te Kooti’s *karakia*’. It consisted, as far as I heard, of chanting portions of the Psalms of David and saying prayers, some of which I recognised as extracted from the English Prayer Book.²⁹⁹

Ngati Huri are of course Tama Kaimoana, Tutakangahau’s people.

His later appearance with the pardoned Te Kooti on one of his travels (a meeting with Ballance at Kihikihi, February 3rd 1885, to discuss a land grant at Orakau) shows an ongoing engagement in the prophet’s affairs that continued in some form up until Te Kooti’s death in April 1893, shortly before Best’s arrival amongst Tuhoe.³⁰⁰ Te Kooti tried unsuccessfully to get back amongst his own Rongowhakaata people at Turanga, and in the process, looked for other land to settle on as well. The meeting with Ballance was in part to do with his desire to return to the East Coast, and also to obtain land at Orakau. The record shows that land already granted there to Te Rangihiroa of Tarawera was flood prone: “Am I an eel, that should have been placed by Mr Bryce in the water to reside?” (AHJR 1885, G-1, p11). He was supported in this by “Tu Takangahau of Uriwera”, who “seconded the request of the previous speaker, that some day land might be given them, instead of the swamp at Orakau” (ibid.). The kōrero continued, with Ballance promising to look into the grievances, and responding to something else he heard from the Urewera leader:

Tu Takangahau said, quoting my words, that the Government have no wish to interfere with Maori religion [There is a context here, a letter

²⁹⁹ Brabant, Herbert W, to the Minister of Native Affairs, AJHR 1874, G2, p7. See also Binney (Binney, 2002a, 306).

³⁰⁰ See AHJR 1885, G-1, pp10-12.

Ballance had previously written, advising Te Kooti's party not to travel to the East Coast, Wairoa in particular]. If you will read that letter again, you will see that it did not prohibit Te Kooti and his people from visiting the East Coast [He had written that ill will towards them risked their safety and public order]. It will be a matter left entirely with yourselves...[the Government will]...advise these people at Wairoa not to interfere with you. When I said the Government would protect you in the exercise of *your religion* I meant what I said. I was also glad to hear the *sentiments expressed by Tu Takangahau* that the object of your people in going to the East Coast was affection, *and the making of the people of one, and religion* (ibid., 12, italics mine).

Te Kooti himself replied that the road he intended to travel was that laid down by Ballance's predecessor as Native Minister, Bryce, "your word to me, and affection, and the making of one, and *Christianity*".

There is a clear picture here of Tutakangahau intimately involved with Te Kooti's mission, and his peregrinations after the pardon. More than that, he is seen to be advocating religious and civil freedom, in order that the believers can practice their faith: "Maori religion". Whatever he may have told Best about this aspect of his "Maori mentality", Te Peehi does not mention it. It is scarcely believable that Best knew or saw nothing of Tutakangahau's religious practice, nor heard anything of this history from others in the area. For over twenty-five years, a time of war, upheaval and religious fervour, Tutakangahau had fought with Te Kooti, accompanied him on his journeys, and absorbed the prophet's teachings. He belonged to what Ballance tacitly acknowledged as a Māori expression of Christianity, and according to the above account, Tutakangahau was a proponent of some form of pan-Māori unity on a religious basis. He is not a man who can in any way be regarded as the repository of unmediated traditional knowledge: the vast lore Best claimed he undoubtedly possessed, was already filtered and shaped by the biblical structures of Christian literacy. His attempts to work within the Ture (law of God) and the ture (the law of men) are further proof of his

involvement and place in the post-traditional order. His political activities now need to be evaluated in the light of the above.³⁰¹

Confiscation and land politics: resistance and engagement.

Tutakangahau's political engagement with the settler government began in earnest with the establishment of Te Whitu Tekau (1871-72), an early example of local self-government in the rohe potae; and saw him eventually become a Commissioner in the Urewera District Native Reserve (1896). He was a chief, a local politician and a public figure in his day: we see almost nothing of this side of him in Best. These aspects of his life and character did not fit Best's image of his still pristine psyche. The economics of survival and preservation led this Tuhoe leader more deeply into political involvement. Tutakangahau and his peers had to make many difficult choices, including how to respond to government pressure to bring more roads into Tuhoe lands. Roads brought prosperity and yet were highways for settler encroachment: the immediate rewards of wage labour, set against the increasing pressure to sell land once Pākehā farmers and leaseholders had gained entry to a district. Schools, communications, the temptations of inclusion in the Pākehā polity, the threat of power allied to his own need, as a powerful man, to belong to power, jostled with his loyalty to his own people. Tutakangahau experienced and embodied the major conflicts faced by Māori of his generation, especially those in changing leadership roles. These political experiences and choices will be examined next.

It is as a local leader, as a founding member of Te Whitu Tekau, that his correspondence with government agents and officials begins to appear in the historical record.³⁰² This body was one of many semi-permanent committees, or elected councils, which were established at both *hapu* and tribal level. According to Ward, they were primarily concerned with the basic problem of

³⁰¹ Again, separating the sacred from the secular in this context is more a taxonomic operation for today, than a reality of Tutakangahau's existence.

³⁰² See Ward (1973, 1995), pp 271-272.

settling land claims and preventing alienation of tribal land by individual members.

At a large meeting of the Tuhoe *hapu* in June 1872, 'All the Urewera boundaries were joined into one' and a *Hokowhitu* or council of seventy was elected to prevent applications to the Land Court, or for survey or disposal of land in any way and to control disorder 'so no crime might be charged against them'. The Urewera boundaries remained firm through the 1870s and 1880s against the blandishments of government officers (Ward, 1995, 272).

Ward footnotes these quotes as coming from a letter from "*Tutekanahau* to Ormond, 8 June 1872", sourcing AGG-HB 2/1 (Agents of the General Government, Archives, New Zealand National Archives, Wellington, AGG-A 1/1-4, AGG-HB 2/1-3).³⁰³ In this letter, Tutakangahau went further, telling Ormond that the Seventy "had joined the boundaries of the Urewera as one ('kua huihui nga rohe o te Urewera'). They would conduct their own affairs within their boundaries; land within the boundaries was not to be sold, and they also notified Ormond of their objections to the Native Land Court and any surveying activities. He enclosed £1, asking Ormond to see that his letter was published in the government gazette, and the gazette regularly sent to him. This is a clear indication of his political literacy: a sign of his material standing, that he wanted to see himself and his people represented in an official organ, as well as keep abreast of government thinking. It would also provide him with a copy of the formal agreement the chiefs had made, and the sending of later copies would ensure he was informed of wider developments outside his rohe (area).

Tutakangahau was in the forefront of the activities of Te Whitu Tekau, and in September 1872, he wrote petitioning the government on the return of Tuhoe

³⁰³ See also O'Malley (1997) on the formation of Komiti in the 1870s, "possibly signifying a recognition of the need to adapt to the new challenges posed by the Native Land Court" (O'Malley, 1997, 41).

lands. The letter was filed and ignored.³⁰⁴ Makarini was told shortly afterwards that neither Ruātoki nor any other confiscated land would be given back. Nevertheless, Tutakangahau had made it clear to Ormond – and to the government thereby – what the Seventy were all about.³⁰⁵ They would conduct local affairs, and police their own boundaries. They did not want the Native Land Court operating in their rohe, nor any surveying done; they would aim at the recovery of the confiscated territory³⁰⁶ (Binney, 2002a, 278). They were clear about the rationale behind road making, aware that such means had an end, in breaking down their ability to control their own territory, and they intended to resist leasing and sales. However, the genuine operation of hapū autonomy meant that some local leaders – including Hetaraka of Maungapohatu – differed over the roading question. Ngati Huri were favourable, where their own men would gain employment from these activities (ibid., 282).

This was to prove a chink in their armour: Tutakangahau is recorded as writing in December 1872 that Ngati Huri had no objection to road making, but that all other leaders should agree: “kia rite nga rangatira katoa ki te whakae”.³⁰⁷ He protested that if his letter had reached Ormond and McLean informing them of the consent of “te Urewera me nga rangatira katoa mo te rori he paru anake” (the Urewera peoples and all the leaders for the road, it was not true): in fact, not all had agreed. He had heard from Henare Kepa that they had, but wanted Ormond and McLean to know that all Tuhoe leaders were not in agreement. Speaking for his own people, he went on, “kai te pai noa atu matou mo nga rori” – (they were perfectly willing to have the roads). This is an early sign that differences between various hapū and their local leaders would give the government opportunities to exploit the gaps in their

³⁰⁴ 14 September 1872, Maori Affairs, National Archives, MA 1/1872/1162, MAICR (inwards correspondence). Cited in Binney, 2002: 277.

³⁰⁵ This number is most likely a reference to Moses and the seventy elders of Israel, who ate and drank before God on Mount Sinai (Exodus 24:1, 9-11); and who were given God’s spirit that Moses might not bear the burden all alone (Numbers 11:16, 24-25).

³⁰⁶ 8 June 1872, AGG-HB 2/1. CT.

³⁰⁷ Tutakangahau to Ormond and McLean, 1 December 1872, AGG-HG 2/1. Cited in Binney, 282, above.

previously expressed solidarity. Tutakangahau had joined with the Seventy as a way of looking after both his own and Tuhoe's interests - but these did not always coincide. He welcomed the roads for their local benefits (wages, improved communications, trade, schooling), but saw the larger dangers of land loss through sales to the inevitable influx of Pākehā. With profits to be made and influence extended, road-making helped to breach Tuhoe solidarity.

A major hui was held at Ruatahuna in March 1874, to which the Governor and the Native Minister were invited (in the event, only Brabant, the resident magistrate from Opotiki and a pair of native constables appeared). Tutakangahau was one of those who invited McLean and Fergusson, with a view to arguing a case for the Rohe Pōtae (Binney, 290). He had been following the parliamentary debates from 1872, in the copies he had paid for with his £1 - especially McLean's abortive Native Councils Bill. This was seen as supportive of the Rohe Pōtae, but it was later to be withdrawn, in the face of extreme hostility from Pākehā parliamentarians.³⁰⁸ The major issue was land confiscation, which Tutakangahau and the other leaders refused to accept, but Brabant assured them was not negotiable. This was allied to concern over government leasing practices, which aimed at breaking down the unity of the Rohe Pōtae in a form of "conquest by purchase" (ibid., 299). Kereru put Tuhoe's case when he declared, "The Government stole the land....The Government said they took the land for our fault: we never committed any fault".³⁰⁹ The government's response, via Price was that the Hokowhitu (Seventy) had no standing in law, and any disputes should be taken to the Native Land Court, leaving a bitter taste in the mouths of the hui's organisers.

Tutakangahau's evolving position as moderniser, power broker and kaitakawaenga (mediator) is shown clearly in the early strife over leases

³⁰⁸ See Tutakangahau to Ormond and McLean, 1 December 1872, *AGG-HB*, 2/1. Cited in Binney, 290, above.

³⁰⁹ *AJHR* 1874, G-1A, pp.4-5.

within the Rohe Pōtae from 1874 onwards. Land leased by Rakuraku and Wepiha Apanui to Swindley, around Raungaehe and Te Waimana, in August of 1874 caused such a “furore from Te Whitu Tekau” that they returned his money (ibid., 324ff). Yet a month later, Tutakangahau had written to Brabant accepting the lease, and saying he would call a hui at Ruatahuna to argue for leases “within the Rohe Pōtae, and to obtain schools within their borders, and a road” (ibid., 325). He was compromising, hoping to avoid an isolationist stance that would deny Tuhoe the benefits he saw were possible from engagement. It was a gamble to admit roads, schools and leases, over which Tuhoe hoped to maintain some control. Tutakangahau’s letter to the magistrate reveals a Tuhoe leader aware that there could be benefits from leasing land, and that road work bringing cash, and schools delivering education could give entry into the Pākehā economy and the material fruits of modernity.³¹⁰ There were risks however, especially as leases had already been used as a *lien* towards sale in earlier Native Land Court dealings,³¹¹ and were a known weapon in the “conquest by purchase” strategy. The act of leasing, in the hope of retaining some control, was to prove in vain.

Men like Tutakangahau and other leaders of his era, faced with engagement or retreat, were confronted with the bitter choices that ensued from military weakness. Yet it was this experience of active engagement that later made him so accessible to Best, as opposed to the opposite dynamic of conservative withdrawal (assumed by Smith and his colleagues in the Polynesian Society to obtain amongst older Māori) that would give the ethnographers a last chance of retrieving “ancient lore”. Tutakangahau was present in 1891, when the governor, Lord Onslow, met with Tuhoe leaders at Ruātoki. He was there under the terms of their invitation, listening to Rakuraku remind their guest

³¹⁰ Tutakangahau to Brabant, 11 September 1874, MS Papers 0032:0171, ATL. CT.

³¹¹ The first occasion Tuhoe went to the Native Land Court was in June 1878, when Tamaikoha attempted to assert his mana over Rakuraku in a dispute over 10,491 acres around Te Waimana. The block was awarded to ‘descendants of Tuhoe’, including Ngai Turanga and Ngati Raka. Among the twelve senior ranking Tuhoe chiefs – regardless of residence – was Tutakangahau. Having the senior Tuhoe leaders named as owners was done to keep lesser people out, those who might break ranks and sell. But within five years, the land had been subdivided and sales took place (Binney, 2002a, 343ff).

that government laws were not permitted in the Rohe Pōtae (ibid., 364). Rakuraku was harking back to the oral compact forged with McLean at Whakatane twenty years earlier, on April 15th, 1872³¹² (ibid., 266). Tutakangahau had been at the forefront of local political engagement with the settler government from that earliest point. Before Best ever appeared in the Urewera, and sat down with him, the old man was well-versed in the politics of land loss, and the voicing of long standing grievances to the deaf ears of government. Even before the establishment of Te Whitu Tekau in 1872, Tutakangahau's role was changing from that of an hereditary fighting chief of established mana, enmeshed in tapu, to a literate local politician, increasingly involved in the system which aimed to transfer land from Māori to settler. It was through his later involvement in the Urewera Native Reserve that Tutakangahau would experience ultimate disillusionment in the final decade of his life.

Urewera District Native Reserve and the National Park: 1895-1906.

This final section will comprise an examination of the establishment of the Urewera Native District Reserve in 1896, and Tutakangahau's role in the Seddon Liberal government's scheme to placate both Pākehā and Tuhoe. This was to be done by turning a perceived outpost of Māori resistance into a national park, where the last of the "old-time Māori" could maintain themselves in a wilderness sanctuary, open to tourists seeking the romance of Waikaremoana's charms. Tuhoe's attempt to convert their geographical advantages into a form of self-government would, however, suffer betrayal by degree. This is described here as Tutakangahau's "last stand": the attempt to deal with Carroll and the Seddon government, and secure a Tuhoe bastion,

³¹² An issue raised, among others, was of the 330 acre Whareama reserve, remaining largely unacknowledged until Seddon's visit in 1894. This same reserve appears illustrated in the endpapers of Best's *Waikaremoana* (1897), but was never to be given to Tuhoe: confiscated in 1921 due to unpaid rates, it was vested in the crown three years later (Binney, 365-366).

while maintaining the economic advantages of a relationship with the settler economy. Conversely, the Urewera was seen by the state as a tourism and mining resource, which when roaded, would gradually pacify Tuhoe, and bring them under the sway of civilisation. Over the period, there was gradual erosion of Tuhoe influence and involvement in the Commission and eventually, any real ability they might have had to share the governance of the Urewera.

In the year 1896, as Best's relationship with Tutakangahau was beginning, the older man was cultivating another, more powerful figure in the Pākehā establishment: the Premier, Richard John Seddon, who he had first met at Ruātoki in April 1894. The Liberal leader was then engaged in a long tour of the North Island, speaking to hui (gatherings) about land issues. Seddon had become Premier on Ballance's death in 1893, when he also took over from Cadman as Minister of Native Affairs. He aimed to win Māori over to a trust in the Liberal government, and turn Tuhoe, in particular, from pursuing separatist options, such as Kotahitanga (Marr, 2002., 24). In conjunction with James Carroll, recently appointed as Minister Representing the Native Race, reforms in Māori land legislation were pursued by Seddon during the 1890s and early 1900s (Ward: 1975, 294-315; Brooking: 1992, 78-98; Marr: 2002, 17-70). A populist West Coast politician with little experience of Māori, he nevertheless combined an authoritarian gusto with a natural sympathy for the underdog – while at the same time working to release more land for settlement and employment, in order to maintain his grip in office. This combination of factors would both raise, and finally dash Tuhoe hopes of maintaining autonomy in the rohe pōtae, leading to the disillusionment of Tutakangahau and the frustration of his political hopes. Tuhoe themselves were anxious to consolidate the earlier agreement with McLean and get some measure of legal recognition of their rights to local self-government. They looked to Carroll to represent their views in Wellington, and invited Seddon himself to come and discuss their concerns, as he had done with other iwi around the North Island since becoming Native Minister. The stage was set

for a series of hui in which Tutakangahau, as a leading man of Tuhoe was a major player.³¹³

In March of 1894, Seddon and Carroll commenced a tour of the remaining Māori landholdings in the North Island, eventually arriving at Ruātoki in late March: here, local leaders such as Numia Kereru, Heteraka Whakaunua and Tutakangahau had gathered to meet him. A robust debater unafraid of confrontation, Seddon made clear he had come to listen to their thoughts; that by coming he was treating them as he would any Pākehā rangatira, and they “should not be afraid to be truthful” (*AJHR*, 1895, 48, 49). The record in the *AJHR* indeed portrays him as listening, but his lengthy replies in the document occupy a disproportionate amount of space to that recorded of his hosts’ speeches. It is difficult to assess the way this hui was recorded; the recorder may have edited the contributions of the Māori speakers. Seddon had come with an agenda: to loosen the grip of Māori on their remaining (supposedly under-utilised) lands, and to open them up for further sale, lease and settlement.³¹⁴ Pressure from the electorate, combined with his own unstoppable paternalism, ensured his desired outcome would be different from those of the assembled Tuhoe. Seddon was aware of the shortcomings of the old Native Land Court, but was committed to surveys and the establishment of title. He was overseeing the reintroduction of Crown pre-emption, incorporation under the new Native Land Court Act of that same year, and the setting up of Māori as leaseholders, with the proceeds of their land sales to the Crown invested in the Public Trust, to be paid out as dividends. In a word, his model was the paternalism of a benevolent despot. Those Tuhoe who were flattered by his arrival – a unique event - were soon to get a closer view of his *modus operandi*.

³¹³ See: *AJHR* G-1, 1895, 1-89 (*AJHR - Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives*, 1895).

³¹⁴ See Brooking. Inward correspondence to the Minister of Lands to the Native Land Purchase Office, 1873-1920, item 93/117, MA MLP Vol. IV, Register 74, National Archives; W.L. Rees, *The Native land Laws and the Settlement of the North Island*, Auckland, 1873 (Brooking, 1992, 78-98).

Tutakangahau spoke second, after the canny Numia Kereru, who would give the Premier the roughest ride: “Some of the remarks that have fallen from you I will eagerly devour, those that are palatable; those that are bitter, I will reject” (ibid., 49). This guarded respect set the tone for the later debate, but Tutakangahau’s opening greeting reads far more effusively:

Welcome! Welcome!..Welcome to you O my parent! Your coming here is what my heart has so earnestly desired, as also that of what I might call the orphans and the poor.³¹⁵ It is only by the law that difficulties can be removed and remedies be obtained – that is, through you, who have brought words of love to me, and who represent the law. When the law became established, the evil passed away.³¹⁶ ...The desires of the heart shall be fulfilled; those things that the heart does not desire shall be rejected (ibid., 49).

The Tamaikaimoana elder echoes here the kind of hopes that an earlier generation of Māori leaders, such as Wiremu Tamihana had held: equality in citizenship under the law, from the post-Treaty period up until the land grabs of the 1860s. There is a strong suggestion of Te Kooti’s contemporary influence. His personal appeal to Seddon, and his claim to a familial relationship is nevertheless seasoned with the rider that what he found disagreeable, he would not accept.

A number of other Tuhoe leaders spoke, and sang waiata, including Makarini, who reminded Seddon and Carroll that he had seen Donald McLean in the 1870s, a coded message relating to the verbal contract with Tuhoe to support the rohe pōtae. Some mentioned the arrests of those who had obstructed the surveyors in 1893; others pledged their loyalty to the government as friends. Carroll replied that McLean’s words “still live over the land of the Tuhoe people” (ibid., 50), but then accused them of straying off the right path, like

³¹⁵ See following footnote.

³¹⁶ Note the conflation of the law with the person, and law of the land with a higher, biblical echo (see Romans 13:10, Galatians 5:14). Note also the influence of Te Kooti in his thinking: “ma te Ture ano te Ture e aki – only the Law will correct the Law”, attributed to the prophet before his death a year earlier (17th April, 1893) See Binney (1995), 329, 490.

those who fought at Orakau, men who “were swept off the face of the earth” (ibid., 51). In case that message was not strong enough, he invited them to show him what was wrong with the Native Land Court, when they were “allowing the land to lie waste” (ibid.). This government, Carroll claimed, was one that was looking after their interests: “Here now is a Government that you should propitiate”. The government’s position was beginning to emerge, and Purewa appears to acknowledge this in his opening greeting: “Salutations to you both, who may destroy my body and land”(ibid.). The strongest challenge to Seddon and Carroll followed, as Numia Te Pukenui Kereru gave his analysis of the work of the Land Court. Seddon replied by arguing that Tuhoe would be unable to retain their lands if they were not surveyed, backed by Carroll, who argued they were “not in a position to say the land was [theirs] simply because [they] were in possession of it” (ibid., 55).

When Tutakangahau made his second response, further nuances in the complex inter-hapū relationships of Tuhoe internal politics became clearer. Following the usual flattery – “You, the Premier, are the light of the world” – he went further, revealing that he and Heteraka Whakaunua, and their “five hapus”, had already “made the first application for a survey” (ibid., 59). Five local hapū, consisting of thirty people had sent their applications already to the Surveyor General (Percy Smith). It was obvious not all Tuhoe were against the work of surveyors: “It is not that I am objecting to the surveys. No; it is that the chiefs of Tuhoe may be able to proceed in a definite manner in respect to this business” (ibid.). Tuhoe unity in the matter of roads and surveys was difficult to maintain, and Tutakangahau was responsible to his own hapū as well as the wider membership of the rohe pōtae.

From as early as 1872, Tutakangahau had a history of moderation, being willing to compromise on such issues as roads and schools. There was also self-interest: in years to come, while lobbying the Seddon government to protect Tuhoe interests, he would appear at times in the public record seeking to advance his own income and advantage his son, Tukua Te Rangi. A pension was granted to many local leaders after Seddon’s visit, and in

December of 1895, we read of Tutakangahau's request to the Premier for an increase being granted: "kua nukuhia ake to penihana...ki te rua tekau ma rima nga pauna i te tau" (Your pension has been raised...to £25 per annum). In July of the same year, he had written to Percy Smith, to inform him that the trigonometrical station at Maungapohatu was not yet finished, and of his affection for the survey party: "E hoa, ka nui toku pai kia Piripi ratou ko wana pakeha – friend, I like Phillips and the Europeans who are with him very much". He went on: "Otira hai pakeha tuturu maku Hai ruri toku takiwa – however I would like him to be permanently here to make the surveys in my districts" (Government translator, 1895).³¹⁷ This request was made in the context of ongoing disputes among Tuhoe about surveys; Phillips' party had earlier been embroiled in a dispute with Ngati Whare and others, and were turned back from going past Te Whaiti (the end of the old road from Galatea) and pressing on to Ruatahuna. The *Hot Lakes Chronicle* of June 5th 1895 reported that some Tuhoe feared they would be "taxed and that the land will be ultimately acquired by the government".³¹⁸ Earlier obstructions of surveys at Ruātoki had been met with the dispatch of soldiers, as was the case in this incident; plainly, all was not well after the Ruātoki hui, as Seddon had left there believing.

With Tutakangahau at least, Seddon had found a Tuhoe leader with a long history of dealing with Pākehā, who was open to negotiations, both resigned to and welcoming modernity and its concomitant advantages. Phillips the surveyor, writing to Smith in July of the same year, concerning the atrocious weather encountered in the ill-advised winter road survey, wrote thus of the old man:

I am happy to be able to report that myself and party were met at every settlement en route with much kindness...we luckily got native guides and got names of streams etc. On arrival at Maungapohatu were met by Tutakangahau who housed us and gave us his son as guide to the

³¹⁷ Translation by government official. July 23rd 1895, 21734/150, Repro. 1801 (2 of 2), Archives New Zealand, LS-1, 21734 Pt 2.

³¹⁸ *Hot Lakes Chronicle*, June 5th 1895. LS-1, 27134 Pt 2.

mountain. [The natives of] Maungapohatu are most loyal and I feel confident no more obstruction will occur there or elsewhere.³¹⁹

Phillips' relief is obvious, and the spirit of co-operation that existed is seen further in his remark that he had agreed to "erect the station on a good hill some 20 chains inland of the very highest point" which was a burial ground. In the same month, Tutakangahau and others (Pihopa Tamihana, Te Whatanui and Te Tuhi Pihopa) wrote to Seddon and Carroll. ("Kia ora korua kai arahi i nga iwi e rua i te motu nei i runga i te ture nui o te ao katoa - may you be spared to guide the two races of this land under the great law of the this world").³²⁰ He advised them that he was "kai te whaka haere ano ahau i etahi kupu a te ture ki runga i oku hapu me aku tamariki - advocating some parts of the law to my hapus and also my children". Some were listening and others were not, seeking "nga matau ranga o te motu nei i runga i te kotahi tanga o nga tangata maori o te motu nei – information from the Kotahitanga (Native Federation Council of New Zealand)". It was part of Seddon's policy to induce leaders such as Tutakangahau to trust the Liberals, and avoid alliances with Kotahitanga and the Kingitanga. In Tutakangahau's case, he seemed to have had some success. Tutakangahau wrote that any expectations that Kotahitanga could help them were unlikely to be fulfilled, and he would do all in his power to administer the law in his district: "Ka kaha tonu au ki te whakahaere i e tahi kupu o teture ki runga i oku hapu me oku wahi whenua i roto i tenei rohe". He also wrote of his support for roadmaking and further surveying, having charged Te Tuhi (Pihopa) to explain these matters, and bring back the government's reply. He concluded by saying he intended to go to Wellington himself on July 14th. These early discussions and those of a meeting held in September at Parliament were to lead directly to the creation and passing of the Urewera District Native Reserve Act of the following year.

Tutakangahau was not alone in his estimation that cooperation with the government was inevitable, but not all who recognised the threat to the rohe pōtae and Tuhoe solidarity were so resigned. The same Te Tuhi Pihopa that

³¹⁹ LS-1, Pt 2, 21734/120, telegram to Percy Smith, Surveyor General, from Phillips.

³²⁰ Letter to Seddon and Carroll, July 7th 1895, LS-1, 21734, Pt 2.

Tutakangahau mentions in the letter above accompanied the surveyor Wilson from Te Whaiti to Ruatahuna in late June of 1895, where he faced a vigorous challenge on the issue of road building from Paraki.³²¹ Te Tuhi Pihopa saw the road could also be useful for Tuhoe, and the government could not ultimately be resisted: “ki ta te kawanatanga te mutunga - the Government will have its way in the end” (p3 in Māori text/p5 in translation). At a further meeting at Ruatahuna, Paraki. along with the chief Te Whenuanui opposed Wilson and the government, while at the same time, expressing Christian hospitality: “when an enemy is hungry, feed him/kua karanga ki te matekai tona hoariri [*obscured by fire damage*]³²² (ibid., 11/6). This richly detailed situation is a further example of the complex weave of characters and forces operating in the Urewera, immediately prior to Best’s arrival. Leaders such as Tutakangahau were negotiating the rapids of modernity as best they could, forming alliances and making relationships with Pākehā officials; others such as Paraki and Te Whenuanui offered both insults and defiance, while in the same breath, citing Scripture commending biblical grace towards those they opposed. This further underlines the difficulties Best would face in excavating pristine pre-contact knowledge and thought forms, as well as pointing up the position of his informant in the scheme of things. Men such as Tutakangahau were familiar with the Pākehā world and sought engagement with it - none of them were living wholly and solely in the past.

Despite such differences, some Tuhoe leaders - including Paraki - were eager to accept the invitations made at Ruātoki the previous year, and in September of 1895, travelled to Wellington to meet Seddon and Carroll. It appears almost certain that Tutakangahau was not present - possibly due to ill health - but maintained a close interest in the discussions. A series of meetings were held with Carroll, prior to a combined meeting on the 7th of September with Seddon, Carroll, Wi Pere and the visiting chiefs (Marr, 2002, 66-70). By late 1895, “it was agreed that there would be legislative protection for the Urewera district” including the establishment of ownership through means other than

³²¹ See LS-1 21734 Pt.2. N/A.

³²² Proverbs 25:21, Romans 12:20.

the Native Land Court, cost free; hapū authority would be recognised; and chiefs and their people would “retain significant...‘local government’ and ‘home rule’” (ibid., 67). Tuhoe wanted to protect their land and maintain their autonomy; Seddon, a romantic and a pragmatist, wished to both conserve the Tuhoe estate and develop its tourism and mining potential. While acknowledging the chiefs’ desire to protect their authority, he was committed to a form of electoral democracy for the proposed local committees, which ultimately threatened to undermine what the chiefs sought to protect: their own remaining powers.

Carroll saw in the Urewera the bastion of a remnant culture, “the last tract of native country in its natural state”, where the state might create “a District in which the natives, the *remnants of the name Maori*” [mine] could gather themselves together³²³ (J1, 1897/1389, 5-6). Wi Pere urged haste, advising Seddon to act quickly and not die in office like Ballance (ibid., 50-51). He wanted “a territory for the Maori people and the indigenous birds”, (ibid., 52) telling Seddon he should not take opposition – such as survey obstructions – personally: Māori had been sat on for so long, it was understandable they should “kick and bite and possibly grasp you in the tender parts”, having been “driven to distraction” by past Government actions (ibid., 55). Both he and Carroll were appealing to Pākehā sentiments, combining the idea of a wildlife sanctuary, and a reserve where the prophesied extinction of an indigenous people in their natural state could possibly be prevented, or at the very least slowed, while remaining open for inspection by the curious traveller. A Pākehā commissioner would be appointed to oversee the process of establishing ownership, after the triangulation surveys had been completed: management at customary hapu level was to be formalised with the creation of local committees (Marr, 2002, 48). Here seemed to be an opportunity to try out a new system that might placate both Māori and settler interests, especially in view of the fact that the Native Land Court was poised to investigate title in the Ruātoki block.

³²³ J1, 1897/1389 – notes of interview with Urewera chiefs, Carroll and Seddon, 7th September 1895, pp1-58, Archives New Zealand Wellington.

In reply, Seddon “was careful to give the impression that he regarded the 7 September meeting as having a constitutional nature” (*J1*, 1897/1389, 50). It was a link to McLean’s earlier agreement with Te Urewera chiefs, and he acknowledged the need to honour spoken words in Māori society: “The words of the Government will be kept because it is the word of the Law itself, the word of servants of the Queen, who is mother to us all and whose laws we must obey” (*J1*, 1897/1389, 48). He recognised their fear of land loss and promised “your lands will not leave you” (*ibid.*, 51). Seddon was taken with Carroll’s sanctuary proposals to create a kind of Jurassic park, a living museum for the tourist trade (*ibid.*, 30-31). There would however remain room for civilisation (individualised gold prospecting and mining rights) and its discontents (the vexed matter of power hierarchies in a committee system, and the potential for local self-government to conflict with the rule of European law). How power would devolve was not clear at this point, and the Tuhoe delegation were left with Seddon’s words to take home: a measure of local self-government conceded, in return for the recognition of the Queen’s mana (Marr, 2002, 55). A letter was composed by Seddon, comprising many of the matters discussed in the earlier hui, and sent out to the delegation members on September 25th, to be taken back to their hapū for debate and discussions, which began almost immediately on their return in October. A draft Bill was circulated in parliament at the close of the 1895 session, and it seems it was also circulated amongst Tuhoe in the recess prior to the 1896 session which saw its passing into law in October of that year.

Tutakangahau was not in Wellington for this important hui, but a letter published on September 21st in the *Auckland Star* reveals him to be fully conversant with progress. Under the headline, “Urewera Natives: A Friendly Letter”, the newspaper reported the arrival of a letter addressed to “the Premier and the lion, Mr Carroll. The writer is a chief called Tutakanahu

(sic)...".³²⁴ He "expresses pleasure" at news "brought from Wellington by Te Teti", and is recorded as writing " 'that all Tuhoe and their land should be put under the law, and that the losses that occurred in the days of foolishness should cease' ". He writes about "young Maoris" getting work on the Queen's road, and how many chains wide it will be; for a post office at Waimana station; orderlies to carry mail until a regular service is possible and also mentions the matter of gold prospecting. The latter he had " formerly placed in the hands of the Government, he says, 'That wish has not ceased.' " (ibid.). The picture is of a cooperative and progressive elder, engaged with modernity and looking to benefit from Seddon's vision of progress. The implication that Tuhoe wanted to put the past land confiscations behind them does not agree with the record; wanting losses to cease was allied to restitution of past losses. The attitude displayed towards the road is both one of pragmatism, and awareness of economic opportunities for Tuhoe; the wish to have a viable mail run established is also part of his political acumen. Regular contact with what the government was doing in Wellington was vital, as was having an input in response: the construction here of Tutakangahau as compliant and biddable is bare of any nuance and politically expedient.

While this report undoubtedly edits the contents of Tutakangahau's letter, he certainly does have a recorded interest in gold prospecting. In January of the following year, Te Tuhi Pihopa and Parakaikete Taumanu had written to Percy Smith, reminding him of applications made by himself, "Tutakangahau and Tukua Te Rangi" to Smith and Cadman "when you came to Ruātoki" (in 1893): "Te kupu ki a koe e te tumuaki honore mo nga ruri mo nga *mahi koura* i roto i taku rohe potae me nga rori i tonoa e au e **tu-taka-ngahau** e **tukua-te rangi** i a koe i rua-toki ia korua a ko te kari-mana...".³²⁵ Both Tutakangahau and his son are seen here applying to prospect for gold in their area. Smith's reply for translation advises the writers to "write to the minister of mines" – which shows that not all Tuhoe were against the commercial

³²⁴ *Auckland Star*, Saturday, September 21, 1895. Document Bank, Waitangi Tribunal, Marr, Cathy, WAI 894, #A21 (b), 266.

³²⁵ LS-1, 21734/169, Pt 2, Repro 1801, Archives New Zealand.

advantages to be gained from using available Pākehā technology to add to their living. To this end, Tutakangahau wrote to Seddon in June of 1896, and in the midst of supporting the appointment of a Commissioner (“he tautoko i te komihana”), and vowing that his “pieces of land within the Rohe Potae” would not be put in the “hands of the Federated party, but that they should be under the general law” (“kaore hoki au e pai kia hoatu ki te kotahitanga engari kai raro i te ture nui o te ao katoa”), he asks for Europeans with mineral expertise to be sent to Maungapohatu – “pakeha titiro kohatu i tae nei ki maungapohatu i nga apiha a nga kawana”. This is referring to mineralogists who could assess gold-bearing stone.³²⁶ This shows the old man’s full immersion in life, taking advantage of opportunities to advance himself, his son, his hapū and Tuhoe.³²⁷

There was conflict and disagreement within Tuhoe over such encroachments: Tutakangahau and his son were odds with their neighbours with regard to prospecting and surveying. Tukua Te Rangi had written to Smith in December of 1895 and made that point: they had both broken ranks and the solidarity of Tuhoe – “nga ture a Tuhoe mo tenei rohe potae, otira na maua ko taku papa Tutakangahau” – by allowing such intrusions.³²⁸ When Clayton the surveyor was opposed at Ruatahuna, Tukua Te Rangi supported him, “but in doing so reminded Smith of the turmoil he had created within Tuhoe” (Binney, 2002b, 200). The degree of chiefly engagement with the settler government and its agents had obvious diversities, according to perceived advantage, and it was such gaps in Tuhoe solidarity that Seddon and the Liberals were able to exploit. These incidents demonstrate that Tutakangahau was willing to break ranks and exercise power on his own behalf. As with his

³²⁶ *J1*, 1896/1082, letter Tutakangahau to Seddon.

³²⁷ Carroll’s attached reply says Tutakangahau should be congratulated for his desire “to advance from the darkness of the past into the growing light of civilisation – kia puta mai koe ki te ao marama, a kua mahue atu nga mahi o te wa pouritanga o te tangata, a kia whakahaere tahi tatou i nga tikanga e tupu tonu ai te ora me te matauranga”.

³²⁸ Tukua Te Rangi to Smith, 23rd December 1895, LS 1/21734, Part 2, NA. The letter shows Tukua Te Rangi’s wide involvement in government activities in their takiwa (area of influence): surveying, roadmaking and prospecting for gold. He is also anxious for Smith to remit payment for his services: “kia tere ta utu mai”.

later relationship with Best – which at times brought him criticism from his own people³²⁹ – they reveal him as actively embracing modernity and its financial advantages, as opposed to simply living in the past.

“Te Ture Motuhake mo Tuhoe – the independent law of Tuhoe”?³³⁰

The Urewera District Native Reserve Act finally passed into law in October 1896, but even when Tuhoe quickly chose their five members, the government proved in no hurry to set the machinery in motion. Seddon was distracted with other matters – the Diamond Jubilee of April 1897, imperialist involvement in the Cook Islands and the looming Boer war³³¹ – finally gazetting the members in February 1898. The Pākehā members were W J Butler, a Native Land Court judge, and S. Percy Smith, the Surveyor General (who, having secured Best’s appointment as quartermaster on the road, now went on to ensure he became Secretary to the Commission). Carroll put forward five names, including that of Tutakangahau. The government continued to drag its feet, and Tuhoe delegations travelled to Wellington to place pressure on Seddon and Carroll to act. A deputation met with the Premier at Parliament on September 26th, 1898: “Numia Kereru, Te Wakaunua, Te Whiu Maraki, Te Aoterangi, Pihopa, and Tutakangahau and Pinohi ”[aka, Tukua Te Rangi]³³² (Notes of Meeting, 60). Also present, along with Seddon were the Māori MPs H Tomoana, Wi Pere and Henare Kaihau.

The members of the Tuhoe delegation were anxious to appraise Seddon of the situation amongst their people: many hui had been held, some becoming

³²⁹ Letter to Smith from Best, Ruatahuna, 29th August 1902: “old Tu’s son and others are slating the old chap for giving me his karakia etc”, blaming this disclosure for a violent storm that ensued. ATL MS-Papers-1187-249, 13.

³³⁰ The name of the Commission flag, agreed on by Māori members at its first sitting at Whakatane, April 1st 1899. *Urewera Minute Book 3* [Urewera Commission vol 1], p 12. Cited in Marr (2002), 134.

³³¹ See (Burdon, 1955, 194-8, 204).

³³² *Meeting between the Premier and Chiefs of the Tuhoe Tribe, at Parliament Buildings, Wellington, 26th September, 1898*. MS Papers-0448-16 Notes of Meetings, ATL.

fractious at the delays of the government in setting the proposed commission in motion. They asked that “a great committee of the Tuhoe should be empowered to look after the interests of the Tuhoe people” (Te Wakaunua), with a clause to that effect inserted in the Act (ibid., 62). This was essential, as the various hui had required that “the *mana* should be established from the top to the bottom”: in other words, that government power should act in concert with Tuhoe, so all would know where they stood. Numia Kereru made clear that Tuhoe now understood their lands to be a reserve, and wanted an immediate start to the investigation by the Commissioners that would lead to subdivision (ibid., 61). Tutakangahau’s opening address had laid the foundation for their case, as he confessed to feeling “*pouri* at times” while the delegation had waited for Seddon to meet them (ibid.). He had come, he said, “with my young people and *we do not desire to go back to the old order of things, because the law has now been established* [mine]”.

This is of critical importance in understanding the old man’s stance as a moderniser and loyalist, in the sense described by Head: “Maori who had found a point of equilibrium between the old world and the new” (Head, 2001, 119). She has argued for the rule of law as a basis of “Maori modernity” and a bulwark against the rejected alternative of endless tribal conflict” (ibid., 119). While these remarks were made apropos of Renata Tamakihikurangi’s stand on the Taranaki wars of the 1860s, this is exactly what Tutakangahau is saying to Seddon forty years on. He wanted the legal recognition of Tuhoe rights to administer their own affairs in the rohe pōtae, under a view of the law that was inextricably interwoven with the biblical Ture. There was covenant value in the words of law-makers, and Seddon himself had said as much at Ruātoki in 1894, where he had first met Tutakangahau and Kereru, his “old friends” (Notes of Meetings, 62). So personal was the nature of this particular meeting that Seddon complained they had not come to see “Mrs Seddon and my children”, and issued an invitation to that effect.

Tutakangahau in his reply expressed a deep sorrow “at the passing away of Sir George Grey” – pointing again to the way these two men saw themselves, as national leaders dealing with matters of grave concern at the highest level.

Seddon, in his role as “chief and father” to Tuhoe - implied in his possession of “the sceptre or *taiaha* of your tribe presented to me by your late father” (Numia Te Pukenui Kereru) - saw himself as a protector of Tuhoe interests. He wanted the surveying completed so there would be “titles ascertained”, with reserves marked out, to be “given voluntarily by the different hapus for education, for hospitals, and for your poor” (ibid., 64). He saw their requests for a policeman at Ruātoki, and post and telegraph, and money order offices, as a sign that Tuhoe “had arrived at a fair state of civilisation” (ibid., 65). Whatever mix of pragmatism and goodwill that underlay his intentions, it was not to be of future benefit to Tuhoe.

It is important here to see Tutakangahau the moderate, loyalist and moderniser in dialogue with Seddon, the Liberal romantic and civilising imperialist. Neither man is unclear about what they really want: Tutakangahau is well-versed in the implications of the Act. He had his own interests in Tuhoe land “not situated in the Rohepotae”, an area of “between 40,000 and 50,000 acres that has been dealt with by the Court” (ibid., 63). His aim was to see “effect given to the Queen’s words when she desired that the land be absolutely tied up for the benefit of Maoris”.³³³ In a word, Tuhoe autonomy: not an isolationist stance, but one where they would control the rate of change, to their own benefit. Seddon, for his part, wanted the Commissioners to appoint a temporary committee, the ascertaining of “blocks and titles...” after which the owners could appoint a general committee, which with the local committee “is to remain with the Commissioners for all time” (ibid., 64). Once the Commissioners were appointed, this could proceed, thus establishing “the *mana* from top to bottom” as Te Wakaunua had petitioned.

In spite of the fact that Seddon’s vision of a local, elected democracy could never mesh with the hereditary power of hapū structures that had formed Tutakangahau’s world, there is, at this point, a coincidence of interests in their

³³³ Most likely a reference to confiscated land; the mention of ‘the Queen’s words’ could be pointing to Article Two of the Treaty of Waitangi.

relationship: power speaking to power, under the assumed control of a higher law. Seddon wanted to bring Tuhoe under the sway of civilisation; Tuhoe wanted to adopt its benefits in their own way, avoiding the primary peril of land loss. There seemed hope for this outcome at that point, so much so that the old man enthused “I was not certain at all about the Tuhoe Rohepotae, and I feel filled with joy at the replies we have got to-day” (ibid., 65). It was a joy that would not last - but at this point in his career, we can say as does Head of Renata, that through an “internalised belief in modernity” he “supported the rule of law, not because he trusted the Pakeha, but because it was part of his culture” (Head, 2001, 121). Tutakangahau had internalised the Law - the law and modernity - to a degree that enabled him to function as a Tuhoe citizen of the wider world, “te ao marama”. Best, his chronicler, would choose to ignore this altogether in his portrayal of the old man as a backward-gazing repository of pristine traditional knowledge.

The Commission began its work in February 1899, but was soon to face the inherent conflict of aims implied in the opposing interests of its members (see Miles: 1999; Binney: 2002; and Marr: 2002). Along with the historic distrust of many Tuhoe hapū, there was great difficulty in establishing their boundaries when many simply overlapped. They were forced to watch the Commissioners reducing the original 58 hapū “down to what was considered a more manageable 34 blocks” (Miles, 1999, 288). The Māori commissioners – at their own initiative – were required to abstain from voting on lands where they had an interest. As this happened often, the two Pākehā members were left to decide ownership, and by 1900, Tutakangahau was complaining:

It is said in one section of the [Act] that this land should be investigated according to Maori customs. But I am afraid that this Commission is rather inclined to adhere to the Native Land Court system of procedure.³³⁴

While the Commission was meant to operate differently from the hated Land Court, the Tuhoe Commissioners were increasingly marginalised over time,

³³⁴ *Urewera Minute Book 3*, 26th February 1900, p 137.

reduced to roles more like that of the Land Court's assessors. There were recriminations against them from their own: Hurae Puketapu wrote to Smith in June, 1900, saying there were plans to remove himself, "Tu (takangahau) and Te Pou. Tamaikoha told me this personally. I asked him the reason but he would not divulge it, the only reason is jealousy".³³⁵ There were objections also raised by Tuhoe about the payment of the Māori commissioners: in attempting to author their own fates, they had become the bearers of a poisoned chalice. Numia Te Pukenui Kereru's trenchant criticisms of the Native Land Court to Seddon's face at Ruātoki in 1894 were coming to pass. Tuhoe were being pitted against Tuhoe, as their most experienced and powerful agents found themselves able to slow, but not halt the inevitable result: saleable, individualised titles. As Marr has described the process, it was the "transforming [of] customary overlapping resources into exclusive, individual 'winner-take-all' interests in land" (Marr, 2002., 136). This was exactly the strategy of the Native Land Court, explained by the Pākehā commission members as necessary to hasten the process, in establishing "the 'best' and therefore exclusive rights to land and in linking shares to land" (ibid., 141).

Inevitably, the European members began to exploit their advantages and imposed a Native Land Court-style system for proof of ownership, gradually relegating the Tuhoe commissioners to a supporting role. Discussing the Waipotiki block in March of 1900, Tutakangahau is recorded as agreeing "yours is a wise decision" and consenting to it.³³⁶ The amendment of the Act in 1900, bringing the disputed Ruātoki lands into the Reserve, and out from the jurisdiction of the Native Land Court, further weakened the role of the Commissioners. Costs associated with prior surveys were carried into the Reserve: there was settler pressure to have this land available for lease and sale, and the rents from leases were to go towards paying the survey costs. This was against the spirit of Seddon's promise in 1894, that the government

³³⁵ Hurae Puketapu, letter to Smith, 25th June 1900, Polynesian Society papers, MS-1187-297. ATL.

³³⁶ *Urewera Minute Book 4*, p18. Cited in Marr, 2002, p143.

would bear these. With those interested Tuhoe commissioners (including Tutakangahau) unable to adjudicate on this land, it was proposed that non-Tuhoe Māori could take part, acting on their behalf. The vision of the Ruātoki hui – and the Rohe Pōtae of the 1870s – was unravelling. Percy Smith had been replaced in 1901 by another Native Land Court judge, Scanell, and the Commission was fast “becoming even more indistinguishable” from the Court (ibid., 154). By October 1902, “Title to [the] whole reserve [was] complete” and the first Commission was adjourned.³³⁷

By the time the second Commission began its work in December 1906, Tutakangahau was no longer a member, and according to a letter from the Secretary of the Native Affairs Department, had forsaken “the Ruatahuna mail run from Te Whaiti to Maungapohatu, left by you to follow the activities of the prophet [Rua]”.³³⁸ By 1908, a year after the old man’s death, the Stout Ngata Commission was able to advise the government that “the Urewera titles were now ‘far advanced enough to allow of the Native Land Court exercising jurisdiction in partition, succession and other cases’ “. ³³⁹ Tutakangahau’s dream of Tuhoe motuhake (autonomy), as expressed in the shape of the Rohe Pōtae he had fought for since the days of McLean forty years previously had pre-deceased him. The system that was finally implemented to enact the promises of 1894 “brought in all the destructive forces such as expenses, prolonged litigation, internal dissension and undermining of chiefly and hapu authority” (Marr, 2002, 163). Seddon had taken the eponymous taiaha, Rongokarae, from Numia Te Pukenui Kereru in that year, as a symbol of the new relationship between the government and Tuhoe. It was the Premier’s obligation thenceforth to protect their interests. Seddon knew this well, harking back to the significance of this “sceptre” in the 1898 hui at Parliament, discussed above. However, the old campaigner had loyalties to a larger tribe - the Pākehā electors - and failed in his duty of care, allowing the verbal agreements, the 1896 Act, and McLean’s

³³⁷ *Urewera Minute Book 7*, p69, cited in Marr (2002), p156.

³³⁸ MA 4/104 – 417. See Chapter Appendix, Tutakangahau and Rua.

³³⁹ *AJHR* 1908 G-1A, p1.

inconvenient promises of the early 1870s to fall by the wayside at the end of his life.

Conclusions:

Seddon had died the year before Tutakangahau: underlying the aspirations of both men were divergent hopes and strategies concerning the fate of Tuhoe lands. Seddon wanted to bring this perceived last bastion of Māori independence under the Queen's writ, and into the colonial economy, without bloodshed. Tutakangahau, for his part, wanted that motuhake, that autonomy, preserved and integrated with te ao hurihuri, the beneficial aspects of a Pākehā modernity: roads, schools, post offices – but above all, to retain the power to hold or dispose of land under their own terms. From an early stage in his political career, he was not averse to negotiating with the government, and had a long history of dealing with Pākehā officials by the time he met Best in 1896. Living by necessity between two worlds - as Best did by choice - he was not the living relic, "the old time Māori" of the Pākehā's literary imaginings. He was in reality a Tuhoe citizen: a chief leading his hapū in the modern world, and seeking advantage for himself, his people and Tuhoe in general. Best does not address these issues in his anthropological practice, because his view of a Māori essence was one structured by its presence in a mythical past.

Best's relationship with Tutakangahau to some degree ran parallel with the Tuhoe chief's cultivation of Seddon. In June of 1896, Tutakangahau had written the Premier about a number of his concerns, opening his letter with the following mihi:

Kia a te hetana pirimia o te kawanatanga tena ra koe te matua o te pani o te rawakore ki a ora koe ma te atua koe e tiaki heoi te mihi aroha//The Hon/lbe. Mr Seddon – Premier of the Government, Salutations to you the Parent of the orphan and the poor, may God have you in His safe

keeping, ended are the words of this kindly greeting³⁴⁰ (*J196/1082*, Archives New Zealand, Wellington).

Note the way in which Tutakangahau greets Seddon: the mihi is substantially biblical, with the reference to the orphans and the poor deriving from a standard accusation of the Old Testament prophets against a neglectful Israel, combined with a stock admonition to New Testament elders to protect those same vulnerable members of society.³⁴¹ The Tuhoe elder was to some extent genuflecting towards Seddon's powerful status – but in his own world, he too was powerful, and was speaking from that base. From his prior meeting with Seddon in 1894, and knowing something of the Premier's background, he appealed to the Pākehā's conscience, from the Ringatu culture of his own experience.³⁴² This is not an aspect of Tutakangahau's culture that interested Best, but here, at the very outset of their engagement, is evidence that this "old time Maori" was as much at home in the new world as in the old that had virtually vanished by this time. Culture as process, flowing in the stream of historical change, was not a model available to Best, but it was certainly a reality experienced by Tutakangahau: through biblical literacy brought by the missionaries, war and confiscation, political engagement and a necessary statecraft. Tutakangahau emerges from this study as a pragmatist: a local and national political figure who stayed the distance over a turbulent period in Tuhoe and New Zealand history. He stands in his own right alongside Best: his history, outside of Best's construction, sets up a necessary tension between the essential Māori being sought by the Pākehā, and the reality of Tuhoe experience that surrounded him. These tensions occur where the worlds they inhabited intersected, and diverged, and in Tutakangahau's case, it would be fair to say that he was just as successful – if not more so – in managing those divergent intersections.

³⁴⁰ The government translation of the time is used here. Official translators were in general highly skilled, but occasionally used *précis* to convey an idea. The writer's idiosyncratic word breaks will also be replicated eg, "te nara" for "tena ra" etc.

³⁴¹ See, eg, Isaiah 10:2, Jeremiah 5:28; Romans 15:26, Galatians 2:10.

³⁴² *J1 96/1082*, draft letter from James Carroll to Tutakangahau, 6.8.96. NB. Noted in another hand, "Tutakangahau, Letter no 99, 7.8.96", which indicates the prolific nature of the old man's epistolary output.

Tutakangahau's biblical literacy had equipped him with some measure of cultural objectivity: it was this that made him the most likely informant for Best, not his membership of a hidden, esoteric priesthood, untouched by Pākehā influence. This cannot be emphasised too strongly. He indeed brought to the Pākehā what he knew of the old ways and lore, objectified and changed through the lens of cultural literacy - and the bible. The pre-contact world had all but vanished, and could only be accessed by Best through representations that by definition were not "reality". In Bakhtinian terms, Tutakangahau had become "exotopic" in relation to traditional Māori society: biblical, and later a more generalised literacy enabled him to "stand outside" of himself and his society, in a way that would have been impossible to his grandparents. His words to Seddon in 1898 make this perfectly clear: "we do not desire to go back to the old order of things". He says this because "the law has now been established", looking to the proposed Act, and Seddon, as the embodiment of the new order.³⁴³ He certainly possessed a vast store of traditional knowledge and lifeways, but he had never lived *traditionally*, wholly enclosed and untouched by modernity and Western consciousness.

Traditional Māori society could be lived in the present, where such matters as whakapapa demonstrated who one was in the here and now. Tutakangahau lived through the arrival of a European historical consciousness that so radically destabilised the efficacy of mana and tapu. Like all hereditary chiefs in the latter half of the nineteenth century, he was compelled to find a new self-definition. It is this search that brought him into relationship with Seddon and Best, and while he may have mourned the passing of the old world late in life, the written record he left behind shows him actively at work in the new, until his final years. On a more prosaic level, his long friendship with Best can be seen as just that: here were two intelligent men, both equipped with the cultural literacy to cross over into one another's worlds. Literate, bilingual and bicultural, self-taught and well able to withstand the rigours of life in the bush, there was more than just the mutual attachment to power, and the

³⁴³ Meeting Between the Premier and Chiefs of Tuhoe, 26th September 1898, MS-Papers-0448-16, ATL, p61.

needs of ethnography that bound these two kaitakawaenga (mediators) together, over a long and difficult decade for Tuhoe hopes. Those who read what remains in the record of the historical man, Tutakangahau, must decide how radically this figure destabilises Best's "Old Tu" and the romanticised "Children of the Mist". The aim of documenting this life has been to demolish the fiction of an accessible, pristine Māori psyche that Best created in order to present Tutakangahau as the "tattooed neolith" in the 1913 *Man* article referred to in the previous chapter. Such a being was plainly imaginary: Tutakangahau was never "an old-time Māori". That mode of being was simply not possible for him, gone by the time he was born. Such a flaw in Best's reading of the Māori situation at the time of his anthropological studies becomes a fault line that runs beneath his global assumptions about who Māori were in the traditional world prior to European contact.

Chapter 7. Best's bequest: mauri in Best, and the post-mortem literature.

7(a). Te Peehi's mauri: Best in the William's Dictionary of the Māori Language.

7(b). Best's legacy: mauri in the post-mortem literature.

"He kupenga kaharoa tana e hao ana i nga momo ika katoa, ma nga wahine i uta e wehewehe" / / "His is a drag net fishing in all types of fish, for the women on shore to separate".³⁴⁴

This two-part chapter examines the literary legacy of Elsdon Best: in part (a), through a chronological examination of the evolution of the meaning of the word mauri in his works; in part (b), by following his influence on writings about mauri since his death. Through his scholarly and popular writings, Elsdon Best's researches into traditional Māori culture and lifeways entered the national bloodstream,³⁴⁵ in spite of the post-mortem criticism he received from a new breed of anthropologists. This literacy legacy, allied to the comprehensive cultural changes in Māori society brought about literacy's advent, means that Māori access significant amounts of traditional knowledge from books. In spite of the fact that Best's star has waned even further since the Māori renaissance of the 1970s his work is never far from the surface in Māori visions of themselves, and Pākehā constructs of Māori identity. This chapter is an examination of Best's enduring and ongoing influences, not available so far in the literature.

³⁴⁴ Apirana Ngata on Best, 17 October 1930 (letter to Te Rangi Hiroa / Peter Buck) (Sorrenson, 1987, 62-63).

³⁴⁵ See eg, J B Condliffe and W Airey, *Short History of New Zealand*, 6th edition (1938), pp 1-15. This was a standard high school text until well into the 1960s, here citing *The Maori* v1-2 (1924). Also, Hyde, Robin, "The Singers of Loneliness", *Tsien Ha Monthly* (August 1938); republished in *Disputed Ground* (1991), ed Boddy and Matthews. Hyde surveys Pākehā writers on Māori and styles Best as one the most reliable and prolific, a "white tohunga" (after James Cowan).

Best was able to define Māori spirituality and assist in its re-invention, after the massive shifts in Māori culture from orality to literacy, in the wake of the 19th century missionary era. This changed not only the way knowledge was transmitted, but also how Māori were able to see themselves and the wider world. The first part of this chapter focuses on Best's interest in Māori spirituality, and his recording of spiritual terms and concepts and practice, especially from Tuhoe informants during the years 1895-1910, and later input from more urbane Māori informants such as Te Whatahoro Jury (1909-30). There is a brief introductory contextualisation of his views on "Maori religion", which frames the etymological focus. In detailing the word *mauri*, and conceptualising its meaning, relationships and application in the pre-contact world, it will be argued that Best began a process of re-invention and expansion that continues to this day. Such definitions and other terms influenced by his work - now found in essentialist texts of the Māori identity movement - are often considered to be purely Māori, and deployed as part of a kaupapa Māori methodology. Kaupapa Māori - by Māori, for Māori, [and often] in Māori - as used in academic settings, may be defined as a Māori pedagogy that uses a Māori world view, *tikanga* Māori and *matauranga* Māori (customs and knowledge), in opposition to perceived Pākehā (Western) epistemologies and hegemonic systems (Smith, 1999b, 1-19). Syncretisms, as always, are omnipresent in colonial literary sources.

The aim is to present a basis for an understanding of the term *mauri* prior to and during Best's attempts to define it. In the beginning was the object: in Best's time, *mauri* were still understood as material talismen, potent physical objects upon - and from - which spiritual power was invoked. His works cite such *mauri* in form of sinkers for fishing lines (1929, 3) and logs in rivers such as O-tangiroa, an eel weir in the Whakatane River near Ruātoki, where *karakia* were chanted to procure a good catch (1902, 69). There was a necessary link between prayer for food gathering and the physical universe of need: unless the gods were kind, starvation would ensue. The spiritual dimension was as real as hunger itself. This chapter will trace what happens

in the life of a word, when the power began to drain out of such a dynamic spiritual present, and imported literary meanings begin to colonise the life of the words themselves – with *mauri* as the example. Endangered or obsolescent rituals became increasingly metaphysical in their application over time. Views of *mauri* will extend from the early writers such as Grey in 1853, to 1975, when a respected elder, Māori Marsden,³⁴⁶ writing in Michael King's seminal text, *Te Ao Hurihuri: the world moves on*, declared

For the Maori, there was a clear distinction between the essence (*mauri*) of a person or object and the distinct realm of the spirit which stood over the realm of the natural order and was indwelt by spiritual beings (196)... This essence (*mauri*) I am convinced was originally regarded as the elemental energy derived from the realm of Te Korekore of which the stuff of the universe was created (King, 1975, 197).

Marsden, an Anglican clergyman evinces a universe of the kind espoused by Teilhard de Chardin,³⁴⁷ with little sign of any referents to his claims of such a Māori belief system. This passage will be discussed at greater length in part (b) of the chapter.

Just as the Māori language has, over time, become objectified in opposition to the dominant New Zealand English, so has the unitary, traditional spirituality of pre-contact Māori been elevated to compete with its Christian rival and supplanter. In the process of cultural change, the linguistic variations that inevitably occur have led to old words gaining new meanings as the ground of their original creation, existence, and usage disappeared. The tracking of *mauri* which follows attempts to illustrate the rise of a Māori linguistic essentialism in response to the effects of colonisation and the recreation of Māori identity. Colonisation – political, economic and intellectual – is the dark

³⁴⁶ Rev. Māori Marsden (1924-1993): “a tohunga, scholar, writer, healer, minister and philosopher of the latter part of the twentieth century.” From Tai Tokerau, Marsden is described as both “an ordained Anglican minister and a graduate of the *whare wānanga*, the traditional tribal centre of higher and esoteric learning” (rear cover) (Marsden, 2003).

³⁴⁷ French Jesuit, palaeontologist, biologist, and philosopher, and theologian (1881-1955), known for his attempts to marry theology and evolutionary biology.

star that hovers behind recent conceptions of indigeneity in New Zealand;³⁴⁸ and Best's influence on such colonial and post-colonial constructs requires close textual examination, particularly when his redefinitions of the pre-contact meanings of words are now put forward as the heart of traditional Māori metaphysics.

This final chapter examines these definitions, especially in relation to spiritual terms (mauri, hau, wairua),³⁴⁹ as found in Williams' *Dictionary of the Māori Language*. Their provenance in pre-1840s culture is not in question; the focus in part (a) is on the expansion of their meanings once Best's researches amongst Tuhoe from 1895 onwards began to find their way into the greatly enlarged 5th edition (1917) of this dictionary of classical and historical Māori language. The study will trace the earliest appearance of the word mauri in the first Williams' *Dictionary* (1844) and through to the fifth edition, making special note of Herbert W Williams' important foreword to the expanded edition. There, he credited Best with "the most important contribution in volume and character...his opinion on the esoteric knowledge of the Maori being of the greatest weight" (1917, viii). The appearances of the word mauri in Best's writings will be sourced, from 1898, until 1929 in the mature works, shortly before his death.

In part (b), the examination of Best's work on mauri in the post-mortem literature (1931 onwards) focuses on the link between mauri and the supreme being Io in Best, and later in modern Māori theology (atuatanga), as a vital element in an evolving spiritual identity. Special attention will be paid to the writing of post-1970 authors such as Maori Marsden, Cleve Barlow and Hirini Moko Mead, as shaping influences on modern day concepts of tikanga Māori and kaupapa Māori. The midwifery of the historian Michael King in promoting a range of Māori views from 1975 onwards will conclude this

³⁴⁸ I am indebted to Dr Roger Maaka for his recent informal input on the relationship between colonisation and the construction of indigeneity (Discussions, June, 2005).

³⁴⁹ See especially his discussion on the imprecision of spiritual language and terminology, Notebook 11: 1911-1912 (Best, 1912, 199-293).

etymological tracing.³⁵⁰ The aim is to test the theory of Best's influence, by isolating his work in this area during the late-colonial era of New Zealand history. This will structure an examination of what emerges in Māori writing in the post-colonial, decolonising milieu (1945-1965), giving rise to present linguistic truisms concerning the meanings and ethnic purity of essentialist terms such as *mauri*. Consideration will also be given to the question of how *mauri* becomes increasingly ethereal and metaphysical over time, as Māori spirituality adapts Judeo-Christian influences, and Graeco-Roman language concepts, into its own self-definitions.

The first section of the chapter opens with a chronological reading of Best's early writings on Māori spirituality; this locates and analyses Best's initial attempts to capture and define *mauri* (1898-1911). The period culminates in the appearance of Best's Urewera material in the 5th edition of the Williams' *Dictionary of the Māori Language* (1917). This source material then reappears progressively in Best's mature general works, characterised as the "late" period. In tracking these appearances of *mauri*, attention will be drawn to the ways in which he seems to change his mind or alter his opinion, particularly during the period when he is obtaining large amounts of information from Te Whatahoro Jury. This genealogy of influence will then be linked to the appearances of *mauri* and related concepts in the modern literature in part (b).³⁵¹

7(a).Te Peehi's *mauri*: Best in the Williams' Dictionary of the Māori Language.

The importation of literary meanings into an oral universe is at the centre of this discussion. Just as Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary of the English Language*

³⁵⁰ The appearance of the literary theorising of *mauri* (Keri Hulme) and its recent re-emergence in Witi Ihimaera's *Whale Rider* phenomenon (a minor local 1980s fiction reborn as an international film success in the new millennium) provides a footnote that shows important post-colonial Māori texts dependent on literary sources - and Best - for their views on *mauri*.

³⁵¹ For a list of source documents, see Chapter Appendices, 7A.

was a seminal publication in the establishment of Standard English, so has the Williams' *Dictionary of the Māori Language* performed a similar function in the fixing and standardising of meanings in Māori. This has been an ongoing project, as is all dictionary making, reflecting linguistic changes in the flux of cultural change. There is loss as well as gain in the literary capture of language used in traditional societies, when colonial lexicographers attempt to lay down meanings embedded in oral cultures that are crumbling under the weight of Western penetration. The relationship of an object, process or belief to a particular word may not share in the Western distinction of symbol and correlative object. In the case of *mauri*, the question arises as to what is left of its pre-contact meaning once the world that sustained it has been so radically altered as to be unrecognisable? Once it has been defined and situated in a Western taxonomy, what does *mauri* mean? Once in the dictionary, it was subject to both "freezing" and re-formulation. By freezing is meant a form of standardisation, that future generations could rely on as traditional, and insert into their ongoing essentialist critiques, where re-formulation takes place.³⁵² Such a reliance depends on faith in the pristinity of the original sources: a belief that what the modern reader reads is what the word meant for Māori in pre-Pākehā times.

This process has been discussed by Carpenter: "We accept that culture & language and other man-made patterns alter experience. Even to observe is to alter, and to define is to alter drastically" (Carpenter, 1974, 19). Best's active intervention in the defining of *mauri* did alter it drastically: literacy was a huge factor in the disappearance of the world in which *mauri* had an integral function and efficacious powers. In some ways, recording and preserving Māori spiritual terms and concepts was akin to Buller's shooting and stuffing of the huia, to the point of extinction. Is it possible to experience anything of what Māori were telling men like Williams in the 1840s, except to appeal to common human experience? The first Williams' Dictionary, simply defines *mauri* as "the heart" illustrating this with "ka oho taku mauri i te putanga o te

³⁵² See for example, Hulme's *Mauri* (1979, 1981), a discussion of bi-cultural poetry in New Zealand, using Best's definition as a building block (Hulme, 1981).

pu – my heart jumped at the firing of the gun” (Williams, 1844, 67). It is still possible to experience the same fright, as I did when passed closely by a car while cycling recently: “ka oho taku mauri i te ariā o te waka”. Yet this is a long way from mauri as the kind of animating life principle that Best uses to explain what mauri meant to Māori in his time and earlier. What Williams begins by defining as a fright, Best continues to expand by resort to Greek analogues he discovered in the writings of his major influence, F. Max Müller.

Early written occurrences of mauri.

Before moving on to consider what Best made of mauri, it is worthwhile to also note that mauri had very few occurrences in the early written sources. There are none in Sir George Grey’s *Ngā mahi a ngā Tipuna*, and in his *Ngā Moteatea* there are just four references to mauri.³⁵³ Other early formulaic occurrences - for instance where “ohorere” is involved, in conjunction with “mauri”, as seen in Williams and Grey at that time - are used in the earliest published translations of the Bible, particularly the Psalms of David.³⁵⁴ This formulation also occurs in Grey: “He Tangi mo Tuterangiwhakataka” (A lament for Tuterangiwhakataka), “Ohore te mauri te hinganga o te hoa/Shocked was my soul when my comrade fell” (Grey, 1853, 109). This is a formulaic utterance in a tangi (lament), in line with the definition above Williams gave in 1844, “Ka oho taku mauri i te putanga o te pu”.³⁵⁵ Ngata’s

³⁵³ Ngata and Jones collected all published 19th century material - including Grey - in their four volume collection of Māori songs, *Ngā Moteatea* (1959, 1961, 1980, 1990). Harlow (1986, 1990) created word indexes to Grey’s *Moteatea* and *Mahi* from Ngata and Jones, whose references to Grey (1853) follow. The above estimate of the occurrence of mauri in Grey is based on Harlow’s indexes (Harlow & Grey, 1990; Harlow & Thornton, 1986).

³⁵⁴ Examples are Psalms 42 and 43. William Puckey’s 1840 translation of the Psalms of David for the CMS (containing unauthorised changes by the printer, Colenso) is substantially the same in as Watts’s 1848 Psalter for the Methodists (Parkinson & Griffith, 2004, 71 182-183). In Psalm 42:5, we have “He aha koe i piko iho ai, e toku wairua? i ohore ai hoki i roto i ahau?”; in the King James Bible of the day, the word translated as “ohore” in Māori is “disquieted”, in the sense of troubled, and downcast. The same wording is found in Psalm 43:5, again a translation of disquieted.³⁵⁴ (British and Foreign Bible Society, 1848, 64-65).

³⁵⁵ Grey’s collection of *mōteatea* (“poems, traditions and chants”) was published in 1853 (Grey, 1853).

translation of Grey's 1853 "original" gives some background information: Tuterangiwhakataka was a Te Ati Awa chief slain in a battle with Ngati Raukawa at Hereheretaua, near present day Tawa (Ngata & Jones, 1972, 233). The influence of Victorian romanticism can be felt in Ngata's translation, given that "oho" and "mauri" in the earliest examples refer most appropriately to the fright incurred when a gun went off, or fear in a crowd (see Williams' Dictionary, 1844). A more figurative translation of "ohore te mauri a te hinganga o te hoa" might be "my heart raced when my friend fell down (dead)", or even, "my blood froze at the fall (death) of my friend ". This is poetry after all, and the latter renderings are poetic attempts to get at the feeling of having a friend die beside you in battle.

Two further examples of mauri appear in *Ngā Mōteatea*: a karakia for the fruitfulness of a planting ("He Karakia, mo nga kai katoa" /a prayer, for all the foods, 379) and a chant for a pure rite of initiation ("He Mauri, no muri o te Purenga" /a mauri after the purification, 421). The first example invokes growth in the mauri of the crop: "koi to mauri ka tupu" /increase your mauri; "tupu koe e to mauri" /grow up by [the presence] of your mauri; "Ka rau huihui/ka rau matomato i to mauri" / be multiplied, be vigorous by your mauri; "Ka te tupu koe i to mauri ora hai" /grow by your living mauri. These invocations to growth and multiplication - by the presence of mauri - are followed by propitiatory remarks to Rongo, the god of cultivations: "tenei to whangai maroro" /this is your portion. Mauri is not explained but assumed, and takes the form of a potentiating power inherent in the growth of the crop, requiring the intervention of the tohunga's karakia to release it. Good harvests were obviously vital to survival.

The second is more detailed, with a rare explanatory note: pure rites were varied, and involved the removal of tapu. In this example, young initiates ("nga tama..nga tauira" /boys, students) undergo ritual purification by a tohunga, in a rite described in itself as a mauri, "He Mauri, No muri o te Purenga" / A Mauri, after the purification rite. An explanatory note tells how

the priest takes a tuft of hair and binds it to a divinatory wand.³⁵⁶ This causes the initiate's own mauri to dwell, or settle him, invoked by the priest. The sacredness of the ceremony is completely fulfilled, as after the hair has been cut and many more purifying prayers (incantations) are chanted, the mauri has been made abundant (potentiated) by the work of the tohunga. The chant goes on, that this is mauri of Ranginui and many other mighty beings, mauri that is like lightning: "Ai, tena te mauri..." (420). The formula is repeated and varied, "Ei tena te wai ka rere" / those are the flowing waters (422); "Ei tena te au ka rere" / those are the currents (ibid); returning to mauri, "Ei tenei hoki te mauri, / Te mauri koi a Hanui" / this is the mauri, the mauri of Hauni (424). These are the ceremonial ablutions ("Ei tenei hoki te ruruku") binding together the assembled gods and the initiates.

The chant concludes with arrival into the world of light ("ki te whaiao, ki te ao marama") and the settling of the mauri, the mauri that comes at the end. A list of demi-gods and ancestors follows: spirit beings, experts and leaders ("te kahui tupua...tawhito...tohunga...ariki"); the student emerges into the world of light, his mauri awakened and his status changed. Mauri here is an unspecified but familiar spiritual power, potentiated by ritual, flowing from the gods to men, and binding the initiate to both worlds: the domain of dangerous spiritual beings and the world of light, te ao marama.

Such formulaic appearances reinforce the argument that the word "mauri" was never extracted from its component language and subjected to the intensive scrutiny that Best gave it, in creating his taxonomies of Māori spiritual concepts. Its rarity in the early literature raises the question of why there are so few occurrences if it really was the kind of concept Best proposes. In the earliest accounts, mauri is invoked in ritual, or occurs in deep emotion, and in simple fright. Williams instances the physical heart and its reaction to strong emotion, as does Grey in the example above. Even thirty years later

³⁵⁶ "Na, ka tango te tohunga i te weu i whitikiria ki te tira karamu, ka whakanohia ki runga ki tenei tangata tona mauri, poto katoa i te tohunga te whakairiri, i muri iho i te kotikotinga o nga makawe, me era karakia nunui ano, o taua purenga, ka whakahua te tohunga i taua mauri" (420).

(see Williams' *Dictionary*, 1871), it is still explained primarily as an emotional centre, "the seat of fear". In these accounts, *mauri* in its most prominent aspect is a quality and an action, a response - as well as a physical object which when prayed over, protected gardens, forests and fisheries. The language is not disposed to accommodate the kinds of abstractions Best later sought to impose, being more directly concerned with the actions of men and gods in the arena of the here and the now. The study now turns to his earliest articles on Māori spirituality, emerging from his first years amongst Tuhoe in the Urewera, where such definitions begin to emerge.

Early Best: Omens and Superstitions, Spiritual Concepts, 1898-1901.

In "Omens and Superstitious Beliefs of the Maori" (*JPS*, Vol VII: 27, 1898) Best was beginning to construct a view of Māori beliefs, and the concept of a life essence located in the body. Best defines the end of life as the "body left minus *hau*, *mauri* and *wairua* – which is Death" (119). This is the first reference to *mauri* in the article, and it remains undifferentiated from the other spiritual elements of humanity's inner life.³⁵⁷ The qualification that Māori beliefs are superstitions frames this article, these being "shackles" that bind even the "so-called Christian Maori" (*ibid.*, 120). The reference occurs in his opening remarks on the need for Māori to "note and avert the many *aitua* or evil omens" ready to manifest at any moment, and to guard against "the horrors of *makutu* or witchcraft" which could attack the abovementioned life essence and kill him (*ibid.*, 119).

Parts One and Two of the 1900-01 *JPS* article, "Spiritual concepts of the Maori" go much further, with lengthy descriptions of Māori views on life and its "vital essences", and the journey of the soul at death and afterwards. *Wairua* and *hau* receive attention in the first article, while *mauri* is discussed

³⁵⁷ Under "Omens" (120-121), Best cites "*mauri rere*" (panic) and "*mauri tau*" (absence of panic) as examples of usage in the field of war. This will find its way into Williams (1917).

in the second. Writing from his camp at Ruatahuna around the turn of the century, Best had been in the Urewera amongst Tuhoe for five years. He aspired to “record the Maori conception of the spiritual nature of man...as believed by the old time Maori” (Best, 1901, I: 173). He defines his field as collecting the “native idea” of human life and its “vital essences...what occurs at death...whether man perishes entirely as the breath leaves the body...or [if] some spirit or essence” passes on to live “in another world or under other conditions”.³⁵⁸

There is an important issue not addressed here: not only will he be dealing in the translation of terms, but in the framing of world-views. No matter how agnostic or atheistic Best may have been, he is setting out a Western model of spirituality shaped by Christianity. He recognises the difficulty, in admitting how easily misled an ethnographer might be, investigating the beliefs of those in the “second culture stage...barbarism” (ibid.). This refers to the errors and prejudices he has observed in other writers.³⁵⁹ In criticising the theoretical blindness of others, he does not discuss his own models; in a sense, he is pretending to be theory, and bias blind. He is candid in admitting his own inadequacies to describe “the little that I do know”, but assures the reader his method has been to collect from “an elder generation of natives now living”, and to cross-check with others, noting where differences occur (see previous chapter). Best is attempting to apply some scientific method, but the principal concern is with his stated intent, the recovery of pristine, pre-contact beliefs from men born in the 1830s, the 1840s and later, well after Christian ideas and European influences were entrenched amongst Tuhoe. We are not told if these facts will be considered. That he considers Tuhoe isolation as proof against ideological contamination is the weakest point of his method:

The following information [was] taken down directly from the lips of native speakers, such speakers moreover being the elderly men of the

³⁵⁸ I have been unable to find a direct source for Best’s usage of “vital essences”.

³⁵⁹ See his remarks about Andrew Lang, (174). Best cites a reviewer, on those “who have approached the study of savage life with preconceived ideas...and a determination to find just what falls in with their theories”.

Tuhoe tribe, the most conservative of Maoris and who have ever held themselves aloof from the intruding *pakeha* (European)³⁶⁰ (ibid., 174).

Best then unveils his theoretical model: socio-cultural evolutionism. Māori beliefs are to be found on “a lower round of the ladder of progress”: higher culture stages have evolved the concept of a soul, which leaves the body at death for an eternal existence; the less advanced races have more worldly heavens (Islam), and also posit distinct spiritual essences (Egypt) (ibid.). For Best, the Ka of the latter is the equivalent of “the Maori *wairua*”, a form of double, “a kind of shadowy self which left the body and returned “ in dreams (175). Yet this Ka differed from the *wairua*, in not leaving the body at death: in other ways, Best continues to seek a definition of this term by the use of Egyptian analogues. He will use the same method in attempting to locate the meaning of *mauri*. While this is understandable and legitimate, if one is continually reminding the reader that such comparisons are little more than guides to what a pre-European Māori *may* have meant by *wairua* or *mauri*, there is no indication that this was the understanding of a man like Tutakangahau. There are no verbatim transcripts to consult, only Best’s reframing of the information. His stress on foreign models, when he has firsthand examples from Māori, is a sign of his search for the kind of universalism in religions proposed by such mentors as Müller.

At this point in his thinking, Best saw Maori as polytheistic, sharing a dangerous universe with a world of personified natural forces: “the Maori really worshipped nothing”³⁶¹ (ibid., 176). There was no higher god, and no prayer in the Western sense: *atua* could be “demons, fairies, deified ancestors, natural phenomena” and *karakia* were more usually “incantations, or, in some cases, invocations”³⁶² (ibid.). *Tohunga* were the priests and controllers

³⁶⁰ One of whom was Tutakangahau, whose life - as considered in the previous chapter - does not accord with this statement. Had they truly held themselves aloof, Best as a Pākehā intruder would have had no informants.

³⁶¹ See Chapter 6.

³⁶² After five years amongst Tuhoe, there is no trace here of the later Io/high god material.

of an esoteric system “so closely resembling those of ancient India and the pre-Semitic peoples of Chaldea”. Yet it was from outside “the radius applying strictly to such beliefs” that Best proposed to “speak of the psychological phenomena noted while studying the Maori conception of the spiritual attributes of man” (ibid., 176-77). He would be “compelled to follow other paths of abstract thought, as trodden by the ancient Maori in his crude endeavour to discover what life is” – yet what this means, he does not specify. The terms he will use as “employed by Maori to denote divers elements of the human body, &c., as also other pertaining to other matters”, he lists and proceeds to describe and illustrate.³⁶³ It is from Part II of this study that his early work on mauri is analysed. It is here that the split between earlier views of mauri seen in the literature – and what we might call Best’s inflation of the term – is first observed. It begins to acquire a patina of authenticity deriving from supposed esoteric knowledge and practice.

Mauri: (pp2-7). Notes from JPS Vol X; 37, 1901.

The discussion of mauri in this article begins with a global definition: “The *mauri* of man has been termed the ‘breath of life’ or spirit of life” – but we are not told by who (Best, 1901, 2). Best says mauri is sometimes “described as the soul” – but “cannot be looked upon as the sole seat of feelings” which were usually seen as “situated in the stomach...[and]...heart” (ibid., 3). A sudden emotion such as fear affected the mauri, as in the expression “oho mauri”, to be startled. He cites the Williams’ *Dictionary of the Maori Language* (1844 and later editions) – “ka oho taku mauri i te putanga o te pu” (mauri startled by a gun going off); Tregear’s *Dictionary*, as giving “*mauri* = the seat of life”; and White’s *Ancient History of the Maori*, vol.iii, p24.³⁶⁴ Best as scholar is lining up the European sources and authorities, as he attempts to place his

³⁶³ “Wairua, Hau, apa hau, and kumanga kai, Mauri, Manawa, Kehua and kikokiko, Ngakau, Ate, Hinegaro, Ata, Ahua, Māwe, Aria and kohiwi” (ibid., 177). This is the list he proceeds to study: See Appendices.

³⁶⁴ There is no connection to this reference in White at the page given. However, his *Ancient History*, Vol 1, Notes, p5, has “*Mauri*: Soul, seat of life. To hiccup is called *toko-mauri* (*toko*, to start, to leap up; *mauri*, life within)” (White, 1887, 5). Tregear is most likely dependent on White.

own investigations in a developing tradition of New Zealand colonial ethnography. He is attempting to fix *mauri* in that discourse, but needs a greater authority than his own and the local writers. Somewhat tentatively, he writes, “*Mauri* might be termed the spark of life, or the physical life principle [my emphasis]” (ibid., 3). He continues, “The Greek *thymos* more nearly equals the Maori *mauri* than any other term I have met with. It is that which moves within us, as in a sudden fright. Like *thymos*, the *mauri* ceases to be at the death of the body” (ibid.). This is the closest we have to an early, global statement, fixing the meaning of the word for Best, and one that has remained and become the standard definition, along with the amplification on the following page, when Best corrects Taylor: “The Rev. R. Taylor translated *mauri* as ‘the living soul’, but ‘the breath of life’ is a better term, and *thymos* the best of all”³⁶⁵ (ibid., 4). The reason for his fixing on *thymos*, from the Greek spiritual terms available to him, was his reliance on the Orientalist philologist, and champion of comparative religions, F. Max Müller, whose influence is discussed at the conclusion of this examination of Best’s analysis in this article. For all his dismissal of Taylor, the missionary’s Christian “living soul” is not so far from what the ethnographer arrives at, using other sources.

It is possible at this early stage of his writing to sense Best feeling his way, aware of the pitfalls, yet not wanting to leave the field to the missionaries. He amplifies *mauri* by linking it to the “*mauri ora* (*mauri* of life or living *mauri*)...a common expression, it denotes the sacred spark of life” (ibid.). He explains this by noting many Māori consider that the “degradation of the sacred *mauri ora* is looked upon as the cause of the decadence of their race”. He discusses the difference between the “*mauri* of man” and non-human *mauri*, such as that residing in forests, oceans, and canoes: “material *mauri*” (ibid., 4-5). “The human *mauri* is an activity, an immaterial element, a sacred spark...[sometimes] ...represented by a material object” (ibid., 4). Material

³⁶⁵ See Genesis 2:7, where God creates man, and breathes “into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living soul”. Taylor uses biblical analogues, Best uses Greek.

mauri were ariā, “visible forms or representations”, such as the mauri ora of the Mātaatua canoe, a manuka tree at Whakatane. Fishermen used mauri or whatu moana, dragged through the water to attract fish; other material mauri were used to make kumara gardens fruitful, and the mauri of an entire forest were sometimes hollow stones “in which was placed some hair or other article”. Such mauri could become common (noa, void of tapu) if cooked food were taken within the forest: mauri as such was part of the whole, a complex web of tapu prohibitions, from which it could not be removed and understood apart from this interweaving (ibid., 6-7). This differentiation between human and material mauri will be taken up again; this summary is the foundation of Best’s first attempts to capture and define mauri.

At this point his definition may be summarised as: “*Mauri* might be termed the spark of life, or the physical life principle...The human *mauri* is an activity, an immaterial element, a sacred spark”. Mauri is an immaterial animating principle in mankind, and “like the *thymos*, the *mauri* ceases to be at the death of the body” (ibid., 3). He relies upon the Greek word *thymos*, and on his mentor, Müller. Best had little or no classical Greek - but he was a voracious and intelligent auto-didact. His adoption of *thymos* as analogous to mauri almost certainly comes from his reading of Müller, whose *Anthropological Religion (the Gifford Lectures)* he was reading at that time³⁶⁶ (Müller, 1898). Müller, as mentioned earlier, was a major influence on Best, and it is possible to place this particular book in Best’s hands from 1895, when he signed his personal copy, and the intervening five years when he wrote this article. Best typically carried such weighty tomes into the bush; it is scarcely believable that he would not have used such an expensive and scholarly resource in formulating his ideas on myth and religion at that time. From Müller’s discussion of the “Discovery of the Soul in Man and in Nature” in this book, he was able to obtain a definition of *thymos*, and one authoritative enough to encapsulate his own thoughts about mauri (Müller,

³⁶⁶ See Craig (239,1964), Appendix II. The 1892 edition was owned - and annotated - by Best. This copy was sold at auction by Craig in May 1969, through BA Sturt & Co of Auckland - “inscribed by E.B., 1895, with his bookplate, brief annotations, \$4.00”. MS-Papers-7888-039, ATL.

1898, 208-234). Best's thymos was Müller's thymos, and became Best's mauri - it is this Orientalist-inflected mauri that has come down to us today through such literature.³⁶⁷

Müller was perfectly placed to influence Best.³⁶⁸ He was engaged in the debate "engendered by the historical and critical study of religion by German scholars on the one hand and by the Darwinian revolution on the other".³⁶⁹ His analysis of Greek mythology - from which Best takes his cue - was based in his theory that mythology was a "disease of language". Mythical beings and stories were actually personified concepts and a form of proto-science. Gods were words coined to express abstractions, but had become personalities over time. Best's conception of the mythopoetic Māori was based on this thinking, and also deeply influenced by Müller's views on comparative religion in the context of human cultural evolution. In Lecture VII of the book under consideration, Müller is examining the origin of spiritual language in early - that is, primitive - psychology. The explanation of thymos (*ibid.*, 212-213) comes as part of a discussion as to how the Greeks evolved spiritual concepts from material meanings, such as psyche, the soul, from its original meaning of "breath" (*ibid.*, 209). Pysche, he argued, meant something subjective, whereas there were other names and terms that originally expressed "acts or qualities" (*ibid.*, 212). In this regard, he instances thymos, literally, as "an inward commotion", what moves within us; but "afterwards comprehended both feelings and actions" (*ibid.*). He cites the *Iliad* (iii.294) to show that when the mind (thymos) and "therefore, his breath, or his life" had left a person's body, death ensued. Yet that same thymos was never spoken of as continuing after death, like psyche. This proved for him that "thymos was really an activity, and not, like psyche, a something active" (*ibid.*, 213).

³⁶⁷ This is an excellent example of the "decentred webs" of influence Ballantyne suggests as a metaphor to replace the hub-and-spoke image of the imperial centre (Ballantyne, 2002, 13-17).

³⁶⁸ See Chapters 3,6, for earlier discussions.

³⁶⁹ See - www.answers.com/m%C3%BCller%20max

The difficulty of precision when discussing the immaterial is plain; even when referring to classical usage, Müller could be no more authoritative than Best. One was dealing with what the ancient Greeks meant in their writings: the other with what the Māori of his day meant in what remained of surviving traditional language and practice; in what can be loosely termed the metaphysical, or the spiritual domains of human experience. Having an authority like Müller provide him with an analogue for *mauri* was a gift: but Best was not trained or equipped to place his mentor in a context, nor to assess his ability in classical Greek inside the discourse he inhabited and in part, had helped to create and sustain. A word such as *thymos* could have many meanings: it is notably vague and difficult to define.³⁷⁰ As Müller says, it does mean an internal commotion; also anger, strong emotion, a fighting spirit. *Thymos* is a portmanteau word, encompassing actual physical anger, and referring to the heart itself. With the Greeks, the material came before the metaphysical, as Müller suggests; but he could well have used *pneuma* as an alternative to *thymos*. *Thymos* is also defined as “soul and spirit, as the principle of life, feeling and thought, esp. of strong feeling and passion” (Liddell, Scott, Jones, & McKenzie, 1940, 810). It encompasses desire and inclination; heartfelt wishing; mind, temper and will; spirit and courage; the seat of anger; fits of anger and passion; the heart as the seat of the emotions, especially joy or grief; of love; and the mind or soul as the seat of thought (ibid.). In other words, just as Müller was able to elaborate a distinction between a subjective quality in *pneuma*/psyche and a more active, temporal location and quality in *thymos*, an agile proponent of the opposite could make a convincing case for *thymos* as subjective, and synonymous with soul. Working solely from Müller on *thymos*, Best had no security of exegesis, nor had he the necessary expertise to fix and define *mauri* using such an analogue. Yet it is this particular definition that comes down to us today in the most recent editions of the The Williams’ *Dictionary of the Māori Language* - as authoritative, and *traditional*.

³⁷⁰ I am indebted for these observations to Dr Victor Parker, HOS, Classics and Linguistics, University of Canterbury, phone conversation, 19.7.2005. The interpretations of his advice are strictly mine.

Further writings on mauri.

From this foundation, Best moved on to illustrate the use of mauri in a number of articles, museum monographs and general works over the remaining years of his writing career - but it is fair to say, his essential viewpoint on mauri (material and immaterial) changed little. There is a fruitful discussion on the extreme difficulty of isolating and defining the language of the spiritual realm to be found in Notebook 11 (examined shortly); but as he got older, his opinions based on the early field research and his reading tended to crystallise. At the turn of the century, he wrote that mauri was the animating life principle, mauri ora was the sacred spark of life, and that material mauri were talismen in which the mauri of a forest or a canoe had been located as protective agents. By the end of his life, in a completed but unpublished second part of *Maori Religion and Mythology*, he was saying much the same³⁷¹ (Best, 1995, 46-47). Māori believed that “this subtle life principle pervades all things, and that it is necessary that it be carefully protected from all harmful influences” (ibid., 47). Mauri was not located in any particular organ of the body (nor were wairua and hau); it was not the seat of the emotions, although “affected to some extent by fear”; it might be termed a “sentient spirit”, of a “more quiescent nature than is the wairua”; it was predominantly a protective principle “representing the gods and the tapu pertaining to them” (ibid.). Material mauri might be stone or wood, and the power that resided within was “implemented in it by the ritual of the *tohunga*”, who implanted the wairua, “the real protecting power” (ibid., 48). Ancestral spirits were “looked upon as *atua*” (anything supernatural), and mauri stones were given to travellers as protection :“(Ka whakamohio e te tohunga nga atua ki roto i taua kohatu hai tiaki i te tangata

³⁷¹ Dominion Museum Bulletin No. 10 was first published 1924. "Reprinted without textual alteration." Includes bibliographical references and index. Bulletin (Dominion Museum (N.Z.) No. 10. Vol.2 (Bulletin no. 11) was completed in 1929, but not finally published until 1982.

haere)" - the tohunga would tell the spirits of that stone to act as protection for the traveller (ibid.).

The above examples are drawn from a lifetime of study and the resulting articles and books that he published on a range of subjects. References to mauri and especially their material manifestations began to appear from 1902 onwards and continued throughout Best's museum career. A mauri could be an eel weir, he wrote in "Food Products of Tuhoeland", instancing one such, "O-tangiroa is the name of an eel *mauri* in the Whakatane River, near Ruatoki" (Best, 1902, 69). The mauri of the forest received extensive attention in "Maori Forest Lore", published in *The Transactions of the New Zealand Institute* (Vol XLII, 1909) and later republished in 1942, after Best's death, edited by Johannes Andersen³⁷² (Best, 1942, 433-481). Further discussions of material mauri appear in the Dominion Museum Bulletins, *The Maori Canoe* (1925), *Maori Agriculture* (1925), *The Pa Maori* (1927), and *Fishing Methods and Devices of the Maori* (1929), all of which build on and illustrate the earlier work. The two better-known general works, *The Maori: vols I & II* (1924) and *The Maori as he was* (1924) - a précis of the two volume work - recycle the above material for a general readership. In summary, this corpus builds up a consistent view of the nature and application of an important aspect of Māori psychology and spiritual belief - but was it really as clear cut as Best has us believe, and was he always so sure about such divisions and definitions in the metaphysical realm?

We can observe in the passage above - cited from Best's discussion of mauri in his final writing on the subject in 1929, two years before his death - that in many respects, mauri is also defined by *what it is not*. It is not "the seat of the emotions", yet sometimes affected by fear; and *where it is not*: not located in any bodily organ. Best here runs up against the body-mind-spirit question that has vexed philosophy, religion, psychology and medicine from the

³⁷² Andersen noted Best's objections to any posthumous editions of his work, and it is clear Best had revised the original 1909 text - but both are still available for comparison.

ancients until today. How can we define what is essentially invisible, beyond approximation and metaphor; and in the terms of needs analysis theory,³⁷³ did such precise definitions exist in an oral culture (the one Best is attempting to locate and describe, after the arrival of literacy)? He was certainly aware that knowledge of traditional life, as once lived, was now beyond acquisition; and that even those older men with whom he associated in order to salvage its remnants, understood and experienced the world in a manner not open to him.

What Best comes up with is an approximation: from his early struggles to capture the meaning of *mauri* at the beginning of his museum tenure, we will see shortly from his notebooks that he is not certain this is possible (Best, 1991-1912, 288-89). His Notebook of 1911-1912 contains a number of references to spiritual terms, at the end of a series of notes obtained from Te Whatahoro Jury.³⁷⁴ These notebooks were where he recorded and arranged his thoughts on various topics, which formed the basis of the later monographs and general books. They would often note the names of informants and quote them verbatim (as here, with Tuta Nihoniho and Jury). The particular interest of this book is the way it locates Best's on-going dependence on Müller for his theological analyses; his admission of the Christian influence on Māori thinking; the influence of Te Whatahoro Jury; and his own tentative conclusions that admit personal uncertainty - that defining what such terms as *mauri*, *wairua* and *hau* meant to Māori in traditional society was a fraught enterprise. His increasing reliance on Te Whatahoro Jury is illustrated by a discussion on the "mauri of a pa" (Best, 1912, 190). There are numerous other examples where this informant is quoted, as "From Te Whatahoro Dec. 1912" and following (*ibid.*, 188-199, 254-264, 276ff). Jury informed Best that the "mauri of a pa was a stone, and it was an institution of pa whakairo only (pa with carved houses), i.e., the higher class of pa, and not of ordinary pa". (*ibid.*) He records a chant: "a certain charm" recited when the stone *mauri* was buried, the *mauri* then becoming a

³⁷³ "Needs only analysis" is a sociolinguistic theory, discussed more fully shortly.

³⁷⁴ See Chapter 6.

taunga, or “abiding place for the gods”. The gods do the work of protection, not the stone on which they rest, which is simply a “material representation” of their presence.

This was in accordance with what Best had written earlier, but as he attempted to widen his schema of spiritual terms and their connections, he gradually assumed a more guarded and sceptical tone. Writing on *manawa* and *manawa ora* in the same year, he admitted that even if “the *manawa ora*...represented a certain portion of *ira atua*, life as known to supernatural beings, divine life...we have no proof of this.” Māori of his day, he continued, could be “no safe guide for us. He is saturated with Christian ideas, more’s the pity”³⁷⁵ (*ibid.*, 286). He went on to compare *manawa* with “the Latin *anima*”, returning to Müller for guidance in a discussion of *psyche* as breath and soul. He was looking for comparisons: “*manawa* as = breath is evidently the origin of the *manawa ora* concept, as in the case of *anima* and *psyche*” (*ibid.*, 287). Müller also explained the Hebrew *neshâmâh* as a vital breath or spirit which all created beings, received from God. To Best it seemed that Māori “looked upon the *manawa ora* as being somewhat equivalent” to this *neshâmâh*, “though this matter certainly needs further enquiry, and corroboration” (*ibid.*, 287-288). According to Müller, Jewish rabbis had defined this *neshâmâh* as consciousness, as part of five spiritual *potentiae* of man. Best was beginning to admit the extreme difficulty of his task, given the impossibility of any real certainty.

Returning to *mauri* and *mauri ora*, he wrote that when enquiring into their “meaning and application...some confusion is liable to arise in our present state of limited knowledge of these expressions or principles” (*ibid.*, 288). Of all these, “the *mauri* and *hau* are the two most difficult propositions in dealing with this phase of Maori mentality and concepts” (*ibid.*). This caution strikes a different note to the apparent certainty we encounter in the later, finished works. Noting that the numerous Hebrew terms for “life principles”

³⁷⁵ See earlier discussion of *Te Whatahoro* in Chapter 6.

were to “some extent synonymous”, he wrote that it was “practically impossible to draw a definite line between the different meanings or definitions”. In that case, he went on, “May not the same remark be applied to Maori terms” (ibid., 288-289). This brutal honesty is the closest Best comes to saying that the task is beyond him, or that what he will give his readers later are really approximations of the indefinable. He admits caution was advisable when trying to be exact about inexactitudes: “In the Greek, Hebrew, Maori and English terms for life principles some confusion and lack of definite meaning seems to exist” (ibid., 291). How is it then that when Herbert Williams published the fifth edition of the Williams’ Dictionary a few years later, there seemed no doubt as to the meaning of *mauri* in all its variations: “Life principle, thymos of man; source of the emotions; talisman, a material symbol” - all taken from Best’s first article on the subject in 1901 (Williams & Williams, 1917, 229)? The question of Best’s influence on Williams will be taken up shortly; the most likely answer seems to be that Best kept his doubts to himself (in what he published, at least), and as his time at the Museum wore on, he decided that authority was more palatable to his audience than ambiguities. We simply do not know, but these notebook entries show that Best at this point was able to question and qualify definitions that would later become certainties by virtue of their inclusion in the Williams’ *Dictionary of the Māori Language*. Over time, these came to be seen as defining traditional Māori knowledge.

Dictionary making and fixing meaning: Best in Williams, 1917.

The purpose of a dictionary is to locate and fix the meanings and usages of words in an historical process, and whatever evidence can be found in the written record helps to provide such fixity. Once an authoritative publication has housed that word, the meaning will tend to stick, and enter the culture as authentic. It does not always follow that the compilers are accurate: half-truths or mistakes may enter in, proving hard to dislodge. Disputed terms may gain legitimacy, as usage takes over. Definitions tend to gather weight over time, such is the authority of dictionaries - and the same has been true of

Williams' dictionary making. Best himself owned a copy and referred to it often (sometimes disputing meanings). In the 1901 article referred to above, he cites the 1892 edition: "The meanings assigned to the word *aria* in Williams' Dictionary are 'to be seen indistinctly...[etc]'" (Best, 1901, 17). Such cross-referencing, Best to Williams and Williams to Best, is typical of the collegial nature of the lexicographer's enterprise. Best had a signed copy of the fifth edition in question:³⁷⁶ in it Williams had written, "Elsdon Best from the author: an inadequate return for much invaluable assistance."³⁷⁷ Best then was thoroughly familiar with the Williams and both men were contributing members to the *Journal of the Polynesian Society*. It was to Best among others that Herbert Williams turned for his extensive revisions and additions to the fifth edition. In the preface of this work he laid out just how important he felt Best was to the work of the Polynesian Society; despite their disagreements, he saw their man in the Urewera as a priceless conduit of esoteric knowledge.

Herbert William's Preface to the 5th edition (1917).

In the preface to this expanded edition, Williams gives a history of dictionary-making in New Zealand, dating the first Williams Dictionary (1844) as the beginning of serious lexicography in the colony. He traces the subsequent editions (1852, 1871, 1892) with their addition of new words and arrangements (Williams & Williams, 1917, v). He also covers material obtained from other dictionaries and sources: Hale (1846), Taylor (1848), Tregear (1891), Colenso (1865-1898, the letter "A") and Atkinson (1902), some completed, others not, whose work had been included in the fifth edition. Grey's South African manuscripts (1906) were obtained by Williams, along with work from Becker, Smith, Shortland, Nelson, Davies, Turnbull, Tregear and numerous correspondents (*ibid.*, v-vi). The acknowledgment of his debt to Best [see 'Sources' in Preface] detailed the supply of "a large number of words, new meanings and examples collected at first hand" (i.e. mostly from

³⁷⁶ *Williams' Maori Dictionary*, Herbert W Williams, MA, Marcus F Marks, Government Printer, Wellington, 1917, 5th edition.

³⁷⁷ Copy in possession of Warwick Jordan, Hard-to-Find Books, Auckland. Sighted December 2003. Signed in front endpaper, "Elsdon W G Craig, N Z Herald"

Tuhoe). He also mentioned ongoing help, in the form of “advice and the prosecution of enquiries” (ibid., vii). This almost certainly implies that Williams went back to Best and he in turn sought more information from Tuhoe, and other informants, regarding particular entries. This would reward further investigation, beyond the scope of the present enquiry, as to what William’s did ask of Best. Williams states that as together with “matter supplied directly”, he had “free use” of Best’s many article in the *JPS*, the *Transactions* and other scientific journals, because of Best’s expertise in “the esoteric knowledge of the Maori” (ibid.).

In discussing the methods used to obtain the meaning of a Māori word (such as the study of cognate Polynesian languages, comparisons of usage, primary and secondary meanings, their appearance in metaphor, song and proverb), Williams highlighted the role of Māori themselves. The most natural procedure was “to enquire from an intelligent Maori of the older generation, or preferably several such” (ibid., ix). He lamented the fact that these sources were “now unfortunately seldom available” and “not always free from the risk of error”. Few, he says, “can resist the temptation to oblige the enquirer, rather than admit ignorance”, and may habitually misuse certain words. There also arose an issue of some meanings “which have been evolved since the advent of Europeans; these sometimes illustrate the essence of the original meaning” (ibid., x).

What Williams touches on here is a problem of historical linguistics: language change in relation to lexicography, especially in colonial situations where rapid cultural dislocation had occurred. Moving Māori from an oral to a written language involved an attempt to fix meanings, not simply of concrete, but also of abstract terms. The challenge was heightened by the bilingual nature of the task: this was not a Māori-Māori dictionary, but a Māori-English volume, an exercise in translation as well as collection. As the dictionary grew over the nineteenth century, the number of those who had heard and understood pre-contact Māori shrank, until none remained; those who were able to contribute, in Best’s day, were all to some extent affected by the

constraints William's highlights. For terms such as *mauri*, those who could have offered a more accurate elaboration than their grandfathers were conceivably a minority. The attempt to assist translation had its own difficulties, especially with the level of knowledge shared by the informant and the scribe, and how it was negotiated. Williams's admission that some meanings had evolved, post-contact, acknowledges an aspect of this difficulty. Such issues have already been considered in examining how Best drew his conclusions and gathered the esoteric knowledge that Williams saw himself obtaining for his readers.

The fruits of Williams' editorial work saw the dictionary virtually double in size from the fourth (1892) edition, to the fifth. There are many entries that acknowledge Best. The enlargement of the meaning of *mauri* from 1844 onwards, until Best's became the opening reference, is shown in the list of entries that follows.³⁷⁸ The following entries are taken from all editions 1844-1917, to track the evolution of the definition of *mauri*.

1. "1844, 1st edition – **mauri** "s. *The heart*. Ka oho taku mauri i te puhanga o te pu; My heart jumped at the firing of the gun. Tukua he karere, kei oho mauri nga tangata o te kainga; Let a messenger be sent, lest the hearts of the people of the place startle" (67).
2. 1871, 2nd ed. – "n. 1. *heart*; seat of fear &c. Ka oho taku mauri i te puhanga o te pu. 2. *poles of mapou* used in the "pure" ceremony, sometimes called "*tokomauri*". 3. *sacred offering*. Ka taia [te karanguu] e te tohunga ki te mauri. [The priest struck with the divinatory wand - to arouse - the mauri]. 4. *twenty eighth day of the moon's age*.
3. 1892, 3rd ed. – as for 1871, with the alteration of "4. *the moon on the twenty ninth day*" and the addition of "5. *totara timber*, of dark colour, and not heavy; in request for canoes."
4. 1915, 4th ed. – as for 1892.
5. 1917, 5th ed. - the "Best edition". Contains six extensive sections, all revised, with three separate parts to section 6, on plants and the moon.

³⁷⁸ See Chapter Appendices, for other occurrences in Williams of spiritual terms defined by Best in these early articles.

The disappearance of the early reference to the heart may be noted. Illustrations are now sourced: in this case to Grey (M, = Nga Moteatea) and Best (J, Journal of the Polynesian Society). This edition (1917, reprinted in 1921) – was edited by Herbert W. Williams, “under the auspices of the Polynesian Society”, and based upon the dictionaries of W. Williams and W. L. Williams. With assistance of Best and other Society members, the dictionary grew from 226 pages in 1915, to nearly 600 in 1917.

The size of the 1917 entry for *mauri* alone in this edition (see following) is testament enough to the significant influence of Best’s researches. The references to his Urewera work recently published in the *JPS* and elsewhere are obvious from examining these entries – and in many other additions to the dictionary’s corpus. Williams, in the final note, actually refers the reader to a particular article in the Journal (see related footnote below).

“**Mauri** (i), **mouri**, n. 1. *Life principle, thymos of man*. Called sometimes **mauri ora**. Apparently at times used for *person*. To maunga tiketike, huinga mauri ora. [Your high mountain, - mauri, ?obsc.] (M.247). Used in the exclamation to avert evil after a sneeze, “Tihe mauri ora” (M.356). 2. *Source of the emotions*; not to be confused with the material seat of the same in **manawa** or **ngakau**. From this comes **oho mauri**, *start suddenly*. Ka oho mauri ahau; or, Ka oho taku mauri. – Oho rere te mauri, te hinganga o te hoa. [my heart raced when my comrade fell] (M.109). Also **mauri rere**, *panic-stricken*; **mauri tau**, *absence of panic*. / / J. vii, 121. [ie, Best, in the Journal of the Polynesian Society].³⁷⁹ 3. *Talisman, a material symbol* of the hidden principle protecting vitality, **mana**, fruitfulness, &c., of people, lands, forests, &c. Ko to mauri ka tupu, tupu koe i to mauri, ka rau huihui koe i to mauri, ka rau matomato koe i to mauri (M.379). [Increase the mauri, may your mauri grow, may you multiply and be vigorous by your mauri]. Ko tenei mea ko te mauri, hai pupuri i te hau o te kainga. [This is the mauri, that keeps the vitality of the village]. – Ko te

³⁷⁹ The reference is to “Maori Omens and Superstitions”, JPS Vol VII:27, 1898.

mauri he mea huna ki te ngaherehere. [The mauri is something hidden in the forest].– Ka ora katoa nga kai o te kainga i tenei mauri. [This mauri preserves all the food of the village]. In some instances **mauri** apparently indicated the principle itself, while the symbol was spoken of as **aria**. Kia tau te mauri o te kai ki raro - let the mauri rest on the earthly food. (P). [On the above senses of **mauri**, / / Best in J. x, 2-7, and elsewhere].³⁸⁰

It is apparent from this that mauri had undergone a radical reappraisal, much of it deriving from Best's Urewera experience and writings. In his preface, Williams had noted "the present edition contains a large amount of material which has hitherto not been available" (ibid., vii). He further stated that "the most important contribution in volume and in character, is that made by Mr Elsdon Best...[who] supplied a very large number of words, new meanings and examples, collected at first hand", and published in the JPS and other scientific journals (ibid., viii). It is clear from the above etymologies how Best's work became established as the gold standard in such vital definitions, and as such it has persisted to this day. The most recent edition of the dictionary (7th, 1971) has the same entry for mauri as does the 1917 edition, and in 1996, a new dictionary of contemporary Māori words, *Te Matatiki*, in coining the term "mauri moe" for the unconscious, cites Williams (197) - and thus Best - in defining mauri as "life principle, thymos of man" (194) (New Zealand. Māori Language Commission., 1996).

The issue here is how his work has become fixed - as in giving traditional Māori meanings - when as translations, they were subject to cultural bias and the forces of syncretism - both philosophic and linguistic. Literary definitions of what were once purely oral formulations would inevitably recast traditional ways of being and acting. This becomes clearer if we briefly consider the ways mauri may have been employed in traditional Māori society through the lens of needs only analysis. Needs only analysis - a sociolinguistic theory - suggests that in any sequence of language we are

³⁸⁰ The reference is to Part II of "The Spiritual Concepts of the Maori", JPS Vol X: 37, March 1901, pp 1-19.

exposed to, we are trying to obtain maximum meaning for minimal effort. Children learn the meaning of complicated - and often redundant - phrases by listening to the way adults apply them in context. Thus, expressions such as “high dudgeon” and instructions such as “tear along the dotted line” come to be internalized and understood with no need to analyse the components. “The principle of NOA”, according to Wray, “is simply that the individual does not break down input any further than is necessary to extract or create meaning”³⁸¹ (Wray, 2005, 4.2).

Humans understand intuitively the function of formulaic language patterns through lifelong exposure, and only define individual words when there is good reason. We understand “high dudgeon” without ever looking up the meaning of the redundant component, “dudgeon”. Applying this to *mauri*, and the function of formulaic expressions in an oral society, one could posit that in such uses of *mauri* (leaving aside physical *mauri*) as “oho rere te *mauri*”, “tihei *mauri* ora”. “*mauri* rere” and “*mauri* tau”, such phrases were understood in total, without the speakers having to consider what “*mauri*” meant in isolation. Best complained often to Smith that many *karakia* he encountered in the mid-1890s were virtually untranslatable, so ancient were the formulations and so encoded the language structures.³⁸² In a system where efficacy was the aim of the incantation or chant, and orality was the only method of transmission, it seems reasonable to suggest that for those to whom such *karakia* were transmitted, and committed, little debate would have ensued about the meaning of the powerful words. Their “meaning” was contained in their power: it was not simply a question of intelligibility, but of efficacy.

³⁸¹In, Cangelosi, Angelo & Nehaniv, Chrystopher L. (eds.) 2005. *Proceedings of the AISB Second International Symposium on the Emergence and Evolution of Linguistic Communication*, University of Hertfordshire, UK, 12-15 April 2005, Society for the Study of Artificial Intelligence and the Simulation of Behaviour, pp.151-173. http://www.aisb.org.uk/publications/proceedings/aisb05/1_EELC_Final.pdf

³⁸² Writing of Hamiora Pio’s five books, containing “a great deal of...matter...[which] is beyond me especially the *karakia* of wh. there are a great many...Parts of them are very obscure to me” (Letter to Smith, 17.9.1895), ATL, MS-0072-08.

It was only after the world of tapu and the fabric of traditional society had been altered irrevocably that men such as Tutakangahau were interrogated by Best as to what “spiritual concepts” such as mauri actually meant. Beyond the context of efficacy and oral transmission, the words in the formula no longer had the visceral and immediate power to act; what Best was asking for, and what he transmits, were “meanings” shaped by a post-Enlightenment quest for taxonomies that would order a world of intelligible systems, universally applicable over all intellectual and physical domains. It is in this sense that men like Best colonized and captured Māori spirituality, in a preservationist imperative that had no thought of future cultural revival: they were practitioners of new social sciences, recording human progress, documenting primitive and passing survivals. Tracing the growth of the meaning in the word mauri over Best’s lifetime leads on to Part (b) of this chapter, Best’s legacy: where did this influence go and does it continue today?

7(b). Best’s legacy: mauri in the post-mortem literature.

Mauri in Buck and Firth, 1931-1949.

In problematizing such definitions in translation, we also bring cultural survival under scrutiny. In translating language, the attempt is also made to “translate” the culture that produced it: in colonial situations, such as the settler dominions of the nineteenth century, power differentials in favour of the colonizers led inevitably to radical change and the complete destruction of such traditional, pre-modern societies as Māori had created. A metamorphosis took place, and the indigenous peoples underwent massive cultural upheaval - some undertaken willingly, and much imposed. Best undertook his work of salvage and preservation in these conditions - it was part of what spurred him on. He appears in many respects as an elegist for a doomed world: the losses heralded by these changes in part both suited and created his moral temper. If his mode then is elegiac, what have his successors

made of his work - those such as Ngata and Te Rangi Hiroa/Peter Buck who came after him, prophesying the demise of European influence in his passing: “Kua mutu haere te wa kia Peehi ma...The time of Best and that crowd is coming to an end” (Sorrenson, 1987, 115)? Was this in fact what happened? Is there any recognizable form of mauri in the textual capture he bequeathed, or what we might call instead “Te Peehi’s Mauri “ - the gospel of Māori spirituality according to Best? To what extent did the Bestian Māori contribute to the establishing of the Io doctrine? An examination of the presence of this mauri in the writings of two prominent Māori and Pākehā anthropologists at the end of Best’s life - Buck and Firth - reveals the old man as very much alive in the literature.

In Buck’s case, Best remained as a presence in his work, even as he was dismissing the old man’s relevance in a series of letters that passed between him and Apirana Ngata (1930-1936, see Sorrenson above). These “kaumatua of this generation” (ibid., 149) discussed at length the development of “Maori ethnology” after the passing of Pākehā researchers such as Percy Smith, and the inevitable decline and death of the ageing Best. Their general agreement was that Te Peehi was a great collector, a “pakeha pioneer” whose work needed to be “straightened up” (Buck in Sorrenson, ibid., 115). Ngata saw Buck as uniquely equipped to finish what Best had started, while Buck encouraged Ngata at the end of his political career in 1932 to devote time to “some of the problems in Maori ethnology” (ibid, 245-246). While acknowledging their university training was not in this field, they were able to approach the field “subjectively”, unlike younger academics such as Skinner, who could only study Maori “objectively”. Best was to be the last Pākehā linguist to enter the Māori house: “Me mutu ia Peehi nga kai tuhituhi Pakeha...mo te taha ki te reo Maori...[] Kaore ratou e uru ki roto o te whare Maori” (ibid., 229). Best’s two general works, *The Maori* (1924) and *The Maori as he was* (1924) were singled out as particularly deficient. Five years after his death, Ngata saw him - by 1924 - as an old man “who had already passed the zenith of his powers”, lacking Buck’s gift of “condensation”, displayed “so

brilliantly in *The Coming of the Maori* in 1929³⁸³ (Ngata in Sorrenson, 1988, 234).

Having found Best wanting in many ways, the question remained could they proceed without him? If Best was, as Ngata had transfigured him, “He kupenga kaharoa tana e hao ana i nga momo ika katoa, ma nga wahine i uta e wehewehe // a drag net fishing in all types of fish, for the women on shore to separate” - how did this process work itself out over time (Sorrenson, 1987, 62-63)? The book Ngata refers to, *The Coming of the Maori*, was a monograph that derived from Buck’s 1925 lecture at the Cawthron Institute, on Māori origins. It contains ten references to Best’s work and lists three articles by him, from the *Transactions of the New Zealand Institute* (Buck, 1929, 42). Buck cites Best to support the idea that Māori could easily have navigated the distances from Tahiti and Rarotonga (13); and also on Whatonga’s settlement near Whakatane (18); on the “pre-Toi people...the Maruiwi” (21); on the pa (hill-fort) culture (25); on the use of the bow by the “pre-Toi people”, citing Te Matorohanga (26); the use of the long spear, the huata (27); and linguistic traces of the pre-Toi people (31). For all that Buck would minimise the importance of Best’s work in the coming decades, at this point he was ready to rely on him in matters of origins, canoe traditions, material culture and language.

When the original monograph was expanded and completely revised in the 1949 book of the same name, Buck had become a pre-eminent figure in Oceanic anthropology. Yet there are still thirteen of Best’s works in the bibliography, including the major museum monographs, and *The Maori*, volumes 1-2. *Maori Religion and mythology* (1924) is cited in a discussion on the use of ritual fires amongst Tuhoe and in particular, the ahi taitai is described as “a tapu fire over which a *karakia* was chanted to *protect the life principle of man* [mine]” (Buck, 1949, 501). This is close to Best on mauri, as is

³⁸³ This is some distance from Buck’s eulogy for Best, as published in the *JPS*: “The reputation of Elsdon Best is established throughout the scientific world. His work forms an imperishable monument to his memory” (21). Vol. 41:1, no.161, March 1932.

the language used to describe a stone mauri as a “talisman” in a discussion on sacrifices made at the completion of “a house of great importance” (ibid., 487). Where it supports Buck’s argument, Best’s “untiring fieldwork” (ibid., 501) is called upon, and although his presence is not as obvious as it was in the earlier sketch, nevertheless citations of his publications pepper Buck’s expanded opus. This could be taken as proof of the Buck-Ngata thesis that Best was a great collector whose materials needed a more studious deployment. It could equally be argued that to use them so freely was a guide to how indispensable he was. It is clear, even from the brief references above, that Best’s mauri had lodged in Buck’s vocabulary, as it had also in another important successor, the Pākehā anthropologist, Raymond Firth.

Firth belonged to the new academics that Buck and Ngata had dismissed as flawed in their limited, objective approach to the anthropology of Māori. Described as “Malinowski’s first and most notable doctoral student, and subsequently the Great Functionalist’s undoctinaire professorial successor at the London School of Economics”, he published his PhD thesis in 1929 as *The Primitive Economics of the New Zealand Maori* (Kessler, 2002, 1-2). As one “present at the creation” of modern anthropology, Firth’s study was the first serious analysis of Māori society through the lens of modern social science, as opposed to the amateur, frontier era of the Best-Smith-Williams regime (ibid.). Firth aimed to “bridge in some measure the gap between economics and anthropology”, analyzing economic problems “in their Maori setting” (Firth, 1929, xix-xx). He was aided in this by the “exceptional amount of ethnographic material” accumulated over a “century of contact with Maori”, most of which had been collected “entirely through the medium of the native tongue”. He noted the value of this to anthropologists, and the “peculiar quality of the data available in Maori literature to the student of primitive man”(ibid., xx). Amongst the collectors, he paid tribute especially to “the unrivalled research of Mr Elsdon Best”. While admitting to a slight acquaintance with Māori and their language, he believed this limited familiarity had assisted him “to preserve details in their correct perspective” and avoid “distorted impressions which a study of purely literary sources is

bound to produce" (ibid., xxi).

Firth, then, was dependent on the integrity of what the nineteenth century linguists could offer him, and this becomes apparent in the case of *mauri*, where it is plain how closely he followed Best's material. In a chapter entitled "Magic in Economics", he states that "magic permeates... all the economic life of the native", all crafts having their spells and incantations, magical ideas being ubiquitous (ibid., 234). In a section on the "Magic of Protection" (using Malinowski and Frazer as theorists), Firth instances *mauri* as an element in the magical protection of natural resources (ibid., 243). It was "the old Maori belief" that all natural objects "possessed a spiritual essence, a non-material life principle (*mauri*)...[and] in its nature this *mauri* was an intangible, imponderable essence, impersonal in character" (ibid., 244). His authority, of course, is Best: "The term 'life principle' by which Best speaks of *mauri* in his valuable papers on the subject [footnote] is probably the most fitting translation that can be devised"³⁸⁴ (ibid.). Quite how one so unfamiliar with the Māori language would be able to assess the accuracy of Best's translation is not clear; what this does show is the implicit trust placed in Best's fieldwork by one of his most illustrious successors.

This reliance is again shown in the following discussion of fertility rites, where he accepts that "according to Best, *ika purapura* and *mauri* are apparently synonymous terms" (ibid., 246). A following section on *rahui* borrows Best's conception of a material *mauri* as a "talisman" which ensured "protection of the fertility of natural resources" (ibid., 247). In a chapter appendix (268-271), he discusses the relationship between *mauri* and *hau*, explaining "Best has spent much patient research elucidating from natives the precise meaning of these allied terms"; yet in the non-human realm, "he still leaves [them] somewhat undefined" (ibid., 268). As discussed earlier, Best had doubts at times about the ability of Pākehā translators to be accurate and precise about such terms. Firth responds to this in covering a range of

³⁸⁴ Firth cites five of Best's articles and books in this footnote, including *Forest Lore* and *Spiritual Concepts of the Maori* (examined earlier in this chapter).

references from 1900-1924, noting that “Best’s explanations are hardly consistent, but that if we accept his later, and *presumably more accurate account* [mine], the *mauri* does bear this alternative meaning of immaterial essence or material repository, according to context” (ibid., 269-270). The question remains as to whether these later accounts, as Firth presumes, were in fact more accurate, or rather, show Best leaving his private doubts behind for a display of public certainty.

Firth sums up his uncertainty as follows: “The blurred outline of the distinction drawn between *hau* and *mauri* by our most eminent ethnographic authority” lead Best to conclude that “these concepts in their immaterial sense are almost synonymous” (ibid., 271). *Mauri* and *hau* are terms of dual significance, as indicated by the “extensive documentation” and the “opinion of the most learned of Maori scholars”. Firth is wholly reliant on Best in this aspect of his thesis, a point where we see the old man entering the modern academic canon. He pays him far more public respect than Ngata and Buck do privately at about the same time: whereas they had the Māori language and inside knowledge of the culture, and were better placed than Firth to pass judgment on Best’s content, they also had a pressing need to displace the Pākehā, which Firth did not share. In the event, both Buck and Firth call upon Best’s resources; *mauri* - along with a veritable substratum of field research - begins a posthumous entry in an essentialist quest for Māori identity in the decades that followed.³⁸⁵ Best - *mauri* and all - was slowly absorbed into discourses of Māoritanga from this point onwards, to reappear fully digested in the era of protest and cultural recovery that seeded in the aftermath of the Second World War and gathered momentum in the Treaty settlements dispensation, post-1975. Proceeding to certain major texts and voices in this

³⁸⁵ The other substantial scholar to discuss *mauri* was J. Prytz Johansen, who agreed with Best on *mauri* as a vital principle, but went further, seeing it as “as a centre where [life] acts and wells out” (1954, 237). He saw *mauri* in the literature as primarily of the sensations, having various bodily manifestations: it was “hardly sufficient to determine it in the abstract”. The same expression might correspond to different psychological experiences; a few expressions “about man’s inner *mauri* confirm it more or less indirectly” (ibid., 239). Johansen nuances Best’s earlier ideas, and is indebted to the old man’s research to the tune of over twenty titles listed in his bibliography (Prytz-Johansen, 1954, 237, 239).

era, it is possible to test this assertion by examining the traces of Best's mauri in the literature over a range of genres.

Best and mauri in the Māori renaissance post-WW2.

The Treaty of Waitangi Act (1975) - which established the Waitangi Tribunal - came thirty years after the end of World War Two, a signpost that the era of decolonization that had revolutionized the so-called Third World was taking statutory and legal form in this former colony, now a settler dominion (Walker, 2004, 212). The uneasy peace that had shaped the post-imperial status quo was fracturing, as Māori protest gathered momentum in an unstable social and political environment conditioned by Britain's entry into the EEC and the end of the golden economic weather postwar. In what has come to be characterized as the "Māori renaissance", an alliance of traditional rural leaders, mature bureaucrats with battlefield credentials, activist baby boom students and women's organizations combined to shake the assumptions of harmonious race relations, and egalitarian access for all. As well as making history, this movement also began a new phase of writing history: for the first time, Māori writers broke into areas of publishing dominated by Pākehā, and began expressing their viewpoints and perspectives in ways their forebears could hardly have imagined. In history, customs/tikanga, biography, theology, lexicography, criticism, poetry and fiction, Māori voices increasingly became the gold standard for a fresh articulation of New Zealand identity. This much is obvious today: what is not so obvious is that the mauri set out by Best in his writing lives on in this new literature.

To test this claim, the genres detailed above will be examined, to conclude this assessment of whether or not Best has any ongoing presence. Large-scale social movements and revolutions may be preceded by ideological writings (as with Marx and Engels), and they may produce them - or both. As with the

Negritude identity movements emanating from the Caribbean and French Equatorial Africa (Cesaire, 1956; Fanon, 1952, 1967) and the Black Power movements of the 1960s US race wars (Cleaver, 1967), the social unrest and political changes that energized Māori protest produced their own ūr-texts. Many of the younger urban intellectuals, such as Syd Jackson and Ted Nia were influenced by these overseas movements and their theorists. Yet it was not until the Pākehā historian and biographer, Michael King produced the seminal *Te Ao Hurihuri: the world moves on*, that a body of Māori voices were gathered together to articulate the new millennium (King, 1975). A history graduate and journalist, King had found himself - fresh from journalism school - as Māori affairs reporter for a Waikato newspaper. Drawn into a world he barely knew, he gradually became an interlocutor for Māori views in the Pākehā media, and as a biographer of significant Māori figures (such as Te Puea Herangi), an amanuensis of sorts, a mangai (mouthpiece) for movers and shakers in the Māori community who had little national profile. In one sense, King was a Best for his times: they were not to last long, given the resentment of many Māori who wanted Pākehā out of that “whare Māori” which Buck had demanded be cleared of the old school ethnographers. King was to move on in response to this pressure, but the book in question, where Māori leaders and experts get their say, is one of his more enduring and problematic legacies.

King presents the book as an exploration of Māoritanga (Māori culture), “possibly a European concept”, in its various tribal manifestations (“Tuhoetanga...Waikatotanga...and so on”) (ibid., 18). The authors express views “true for them as individuals from different tribal backgrounds”, exploring issues “Europeans often shy away from...identity, land, marae, processes of learning and qualities like tapu” (ibid., 18, 19). Writers such as Ranginui Walker (marae), Sam Karetu (language and marae protocol) and John Rangihau (being Maori) are among the eight major contributors (there are brief prefatory offerings from Te Uira Manihera and Ngoi Pewhairangi). The contributor to be examined here is the Rev Maori Marsden (1924-1993), whose essay “God, Man and the Universe: A Maori View” has since been

republished (2003), and has become somewhat ubiquitous in the kaupapa Māori essentialist movement that continues to the present.³⁸⁶

Marsden (Te Aupouri) was an Anglican clergyman and had early training in Ngā Puhi tribal lore in whare wānanga. He inhabited the physical and cultural landscape of earliest Pākehā-Māori contact: Te Tai Tokerau, the far north, where Christianity first took root. His essay on Māori spirituality sets out to conceptualise a uniquely Māori spiritual dimension that is above all, a subjectivist retort to the objectifying influence of Pākehā ethnographers (by implication, Best). In this, Marsden echoes both Ngata's and Buck's desire to keep such interlopers out of the "whare Māori", and to deploy emic views of Māori life, correcting and displacing the etic models that had been so dominant. The problem for Marsden was one of escaping unconscious influences: was it possible for him stand on a uniquely Māori ground, in order to examine his roots, or did he depend on non-Māori thought forms to establish what it meant to be Māori? Marsden will be seen grappling with mauri, as did Best.

He opens unequivocally: "The route to Maoritanga through abstract interpretation is a dead end" (Marsden in King, *ibid.*, 191). However, he finds himself compelled to interpret Māoritanga by way of some decidedly abstract language. He goes on, "I like to use a descriptive method to explore the features of consciousness found in Maori cultural experiences" (*ibid.*). Untroubled by the notion of consciousness itself as an abstraction, he proceeds: "I shall describe the religious, philosophical and metaphysical attitudes upon which Maoritanga is based" (*ibid.*). While relying on Western paradigms - philosophy and metaphysics - for his "formal analysis", he stresses "it is important to remember that Maoritanga is a thing of the heart rather than the head" (*ibid.*). This suggests that for anyone to understand, or rather, *experience* Māoritanga, they must be Māori, and enter Māori states of mind: "I believe only a Māori from within the culture can do this adequately"

³⁸⁶ "Kaupapa Māori: by Māori, for Māori and (often) in Māori", an ideology and pedagogy which posits unique Māori forms of knowledge (matauranga).

(ibid., 218) The question then arises as to what is the relationship of being Māori, to his conception of Māoritanga?

Marsden is unequivocal: “For what is Maoritanga? Briefly, it is the corporate view that Maoris hold about *ultimate reality and meaning* [mine]” (ibid, 1992 (1975), 192). He proceeds to analyse Māoritanga as contained in these views by examining a formal mihi (welcome) “used on special occasions to greet especially eminent guests on to a marae” (ibid.).

Haere mai te ihi; haere mai te wehi; haere mai te mana; haere mai te tapu / / Draw near o excellent ones; draw near o awesome ones; draw near o charismatic ones; draw near o sacred ones.

There is no context given to this formulaic expression - where and when it is used - nor does he nuance the implied claim that this mihi is used universally at all hui (meetings) in all circumstances. This single utterance is used as a lens to analyse Māori views on ultimate reality and “the relationships among God, man and the universe” (ibid., 193). He proceeds by explaining and contextualising the important nouns: ihi, wehi, mana and tapu. In the process of discussing tapu, he gives his view on the subject of mauri, the concept under consideration in regard to Best’s influence. As with Best’s attempts to define Māori spiritual terms, Marsden falls back on European analogies, specifically - given his Anglican education - from the Greek and Hebrew of biblical theology. Ihi is analogous to the Greek *arête* (martial excellence); mana may be “translated as charisma” and to be fully understood needs the Greek “*exousia*” (lawful, permitted) and “*dunamis*” (having power); and tapu is “close to the Jewish idea translated in the words, ‘sacred’ and ‘holy’ ” (ibid., 193-194). Throughout the rest of the article, Marsden continually explains and contextualises his Māori metaphysics in biblical terms (pure rites and ‘holy water’, 198; offerings at tangi, 201; sacramental systems parallel to Christianity, 202; iriiri, rumaki and uhi as baptismal analogues, 202; the tohi rite of te whakapaa as equivalent to confirmation, 205; and cannibalism as a form of communion, 207).

Marsden was attempting to translate Māori concepts with the material closest at hand - his Christian education - and at the same time, valorising a view of Māori metaphysics in a manner attempted by Best. Māori were religious universalists, in no way inferior to Pākehā, operating at their own level of cultural development.

We have glanced at related concepts such as mauri, noa, kaitoa, and the basic religious and sacramental rites associated with these. A comparison between the Maori and the Christian sacramental systems has been made to show that certain spiritual principles are universal in application (ibid., 209).

Marsden would seem uniquely placed to make such an assessment, educated in both Māori tikanga (cultural norms) and Western theology. Yet this does not necessarily equip him to assess objectively which of the concepts he is analysing are pristine Māori - without considering how much influence Pākehā like Best may have had in their literary construction and transmission. As will be seen in the discussion of mauri and in his later writings, Marsden is not averse to minting some syncretistic coinages of his own.

His discussion of mauri (as part of the section on tapu) is a rebuttal of early anthropological views that “primitive man held an animistic view of nature” (ibid., 196). Māori, he claims, differentiated between the “essence (mauri) of a person or object and the distinct realm of the spirit which stood over the realm of the natural order...”. They further distinguished between “the essence of inanimate and animate objects: the created order “partook of mauri (life force, ethos)”, while in humans, “this essence was of a higher order...mauri-ora (life principle)”³⁸⁷ (ibid., 196-97). This is extremely close to what I have described as Best’s view at the turn of the century;³⁸⁸ yet what comes next is very much Marsden’s late 20th century interpretation. He continues,

³⁸⁷ Mauri ora appears early in Grey (247, 1853): “to maunga tikitiki (tiketike?), huinga mauri ora” Obsc.

³⁸⁸ At the turn of the century, he wrote that mauri was the animating life principle, mauri ora was the sacred spark of life, and that material mauri were talismen in which the mauri of a forest or a canoe had been located as protective agents.

This essence (mauri) I am convinced, was originally regarded as elemental energy derived from the realm of Te Korekore out of which the stuff of the universe was created (ibid., 197).

This mauri is a vast distance from what was recorded in 1844, and has metamorphosed even further from Best's understanding of it during the 1890s. This mauri is an evolutionary concept, taking on the literary life of its parent influences: Christianity and the New Physics that by this time were infiltrating process theology.

Marsden would go on to write in the 1980s of Māori achieving an "authentic existence" by becoming "in touch with [their] centre" and having "no doubts about [their] basic convictions" (Marsden, 2003, 27-28). This required a survey of "Western Views of Ultimate Reality" (scientific, humanistic) and an awareness of the "New Physics": Planck, Einstein and Heisenberg (ibid., 28-30). In short, he concluded that the "universe is process...more akin to mind and spirit than it is to matter"; and that "like the New Physicists, the Māori perceived the universe as a 'process' ", going beyond concepts of the "Real world as simply 'pure energy' " (ibid., 30-31). According to Marsden, traditional Māori society conceived of "a world comprised of a series of interconnected realms separated by aeons of time from which there eventually emerged the Natural World", a cosmic process "unified and bound together by spirit" (ibid., 31). Nowhere does he cite any evidence, simply asserting that the "ancient Māori seers like the modern physicists created sets of symbols to provide them with their maps/ models to portray each state in this evolutionary process " (ibid.). These symbols entered myth and liturgy, and were portrayed in the whakapapa of creation, man and all other sentient beings. He then outlines just such a "Genealogy of Creation" (31-32), beginning with Io-take-take (creator, root cause), which flows by 26 other steps to the natural world of Ranginui and Papatuanuku. (see his Appendix Three, "A Genealogy of the Cosmos", ibid., 180-181).

Just as Tutakangahau in Best's day had married Christian creationism to Māori tradition in his whakapapa hui of 1906, so Marsden in the 1980s was

extending the Christian influence and updating it in the shadow of the nuclear age. Charles Royal, the editor of this collection (*The Woven Universe*) notes in the introduction that Marsden's wartime experiences and his reflections on the significance of the atom bombings in Japan had a profound effect on his thinking:

I took the word 'hihiri' which in Māoridom means 'pure energy'. Here I recalled Einstein's concept of the real world behind the natural world as being comprised of 'rhythmical patterns of pure energy' and said to him [an elder at the hui where Marsden was speaking] that this was essentially the same concept (ibid., xiii).

"Hihiri" (from "hiri") is defined in Williams' *Dictionary* as "laborious, brisk, energetic, assiduous" - qualities of industry.³⁸⁹ Marsden, reaching for a word to describe this rending of the fabric of the universe (splitting the atom), appropriates and redefines it, just as he does in the case of modern physics and traditional Māori understandings of the world.³⁹⁰ This is essentially neo-myth, the production of a Māori world view that can re-establish them as equal to Pākehā in any field of knowledge. The Io of Best's day becomes not just the Supreme Being behind all reality, but the weaver of the universe unfolded by Einstein's physics and Paul Tillich's existential theology:³⁹¹

Io the Ground of Being, Root Cause, Creator...uttered his word into eternity and the Void...formed the spiritual framework in which the cosmic process could begin to operate. Thus the...realm of the Potential of Becoming was established (ibid., 32).

Marsden laid down a foundation for a new Māori metaphysics in which mauri has a key role: in the "Narrative Form" of this genealogy, "Io-wānanga

³⁸⁹ As a verb, "to spring up", as of thought.

³⁹⁰ The Rev Richard Taylor records "hihiri" in a creation chant (1855), describing the origins of consciousness in the realm of thought: "Na te pupuke te hihiri / / from the increase the swelling; Na te hihiri te mahara / / from the swelling the thought" (Taylor, 1855, 15).

³⁹¹ Paul Tillich (1886-1965), German theologian, influenced by Martin Heidegger's existential phenomenology (1889-1976). This term, "the Ground of Being" is associated with Tillich's analysis of ontological questions - the metaphysics of pure being - in the light of modern science.

uttered his word" to establish the foundation of all things, "the seed, the shoot and the various roots" (ibid.). From "Te Kākano, the original seed, pulsed the life-principle (*mauri*)", which as a force of nature, impelled the shoot in a metaphysical search, "urged on by its *mauri* from behind in its quest for being". Aeons of time passed, until this "insentient movement" reached critical mass and burst forth "into pure energy (*hihiri*) " (ibid.). This process was guided by direction and purpose: "Out of Te Hihiri was birthed primordial memory", which through the "deep mind, the subconscious, and [thus] consciousness" achieved wisdom (ibid.). Whatever ultimate reality for Māori might consist of - notwithstanding traditional Māori views - what seems uppermost here are the contents of Marsden's mind, the product of his education and experience. Deeply affected by the carnage of World War Two and the arrival of the atomic age, he had entered the Anglican church at a time when one of the few ways for Māori intellectuals to gain tertiary training and professional advancement was within the church. Here, exposed to theological training and the intellectual stimulation of the Death of God debate, he may well have synthesised the earlier learning he had obtained from northern Māori *tohunga*, with an amalgam of creationism, evolutionism, Freudian psychology, atomic physics and New Age spirituality.

Best's *mauri* had grown legs and was moving on. It had become part of a definition that Marsden laid down as a Māori ground of being. This ultimate reality was comprised of:

wairua-spirit; the Universe is 'Process'; *Io Taketake* is First Cause; Spirit is ubiquitous...regenerating all things by its *hau* or *mauri* (Breath of Life-principle); All is One and interlocked together; the Māori approach to life is holistic. There is no sharp division between culture, society and their institutions (ibid., 33).

This theorisation of *mauri*'s place occurs in the context of a discussion on Māori views on the natural world and the use of its resources. *Mauri* as a "life force" is part of a conservation ethic (*rahui*), and in Marsden's discourse, takes on portmanteaux qualities: it can increasingly receive whatever ethical dimension he chooses (ibid., 49). As with any word, it is open to change,

loading, and the inevitable acquisition of meanings and functions unknown to earlier generations. Presentist arguments ascribe contemporary meanings to the past; unexamined revisionism may create anachronistic etymologies. The continuing need for Māori to create a viable identity in the present risks conforming imagined traditions to the contemporary demand for cultural certainty and linguistic purity. The effect, if not the intention is to deliver a resistance theology that shores up Māori identity and self-worth by re-appropriating an unmoored “traditional” world-view that is open to borrowing for the validation of future essentialist ideologies. Mauri meanwhile continues to mutate into an available vessel that may contain whatever the writer requires of it.

Recent occurrences and millennial prospects.

In drawing this discussion of Best’s influence to an end, two further contemporary writers on Māori tikanga will be discussed briefly and a number of literary sources mentioned, for future reference. Cleve Barlow has been cited recently by Shirres as another Ngāpuhi source for his understanding of Io (Shirres, 1997, 113). Barlow, a psychology lecturer of Ngāpuhi descent (and Mormon conviction) published a guide book to “key concepts in Māori culture” in 1991, relying primarily on oral sources, selecting concepts that are “important for understanding Māori culture as it is practised today”. (Barlow, 1994, xvii). This bilingual edition of *Tikanga Whakaaro* was intended to be “a useful resource for studying the language and culture of the Māori people” (ibid), and provides a more recent statement on the meaning of mauri than Marsden’s. In Barlow’s view, “Mauri is a special power possessed by Io which makes it possible for everything to move and live with the conditions and limits of its existence”³⁹² (ibid., 83). Everything has a mauri, and “no-one can control their own mauri or life-essence”. While Marsden is not cited here, his essay discussed above appears in the bibliography, as does

³⁹² See Genesis 1:11, 1:21-25; Acts 17:24-28.

a work by Sidney (Hirini) Moko Mead, *Nga Taonga Tuku Iho a Te Maori: Customary Concepts of the Maori* (1984). As with Marsden, Barlow has a Christian background and roots in Mormonism: the echoes of Best may seem faint in this explanation, but are present, nevertheless.

Hirini Moko Mead (Ngāti Awa, Ngāti Tuwharetoa, Tuhourangi) is a leading figure in Māori academia, and was a foundation professor of Māori Studies at Victoria University of Wellington. His most recent work, *Tikanga Māori: living by Māori values*, is the latest offering in this field to offer a discussion of mauri - and is open about its debt to Best (Mead, 2003, 53-54). Mead aims to explain the nature of tikanga Māori (Māori customs), taking the position that “tikanga is the set of beliefs associated with practices and procedures...established by precedents through time... [and] held to be ritually correct” (ibid., 12). The discussion of mauri occurs in a chapter concerned with “Te Tapu o te Tangata”, or the spiritual self of each person, and for Māori specifically, their birthright described as “kaihau-waiu...the attributes gained through the mother’s milk” (ibid.). This involves “attributes of identity”: ira tangata, ira atua (genetic descent and divine roots); whakapapa (kinship, the social component of genetics); turangawaewae (local identity rights, a place to stand); and pumanawa (natural talents). This is followed by the spiritual attributes, tapu, mana, mauri, wairua and hau (ibid., 42-61).

It is interesting to note that this is the same group of attributes examined by Best in his seminal 1900 article, “Spiritual Concepts of the Maori”, as discussed earlier. Mead cites Best on tapu (47); mauri (53, 54); wairua (55, 56); and hau (58), relying heavily on *Maori Religion and Mythology Vol 2* (1924, 1982) in this latter definition. Returning to examine the entry on mauri (ibid., 53-54), we see that Mead also uses Best throughout, both consciously where he acknowledges him through references, and unconsciously, where the ethnographer’s work has been absorbed into a Māori discourse. He opens by defining mauri from Williams as “ ‘life principle’ or ‘thymos of man’ ” - pure Best (ibid., 53). To this definition, Mead adds the somewhat ambivalent

comment, “The Greek word ‘thymos’ adds to the mystery of mauri and does not help us understand” (ibid.). Mauri, he agrees with Best “is the spark of life”, citing his view from *The Maori Vol 1* (p304, 1924) that “ ‘the Maori viewed the mauri as an activity’ ”. Describing the psychology of mauri, he instances mauri tau, mauri oho and mauri rere - all discussed by Best - without acknowledging the source. The concept of mauri as a talisman is referenced back to the Williams’ Dictionary entry (and thus Best), and there are two further citations from *Maori Religion and Mythology Vol 2* (48), concerning material mauri (ibid., 53, 54). Overall, there are nine references to works by Best in the bibliography - by far the largest contributor.

Books such as these are very influential: they provide a context for countless students in their search for definitions of key concepts in Māori society. Mead’s book, for example, has been held in the library of the University of Canterbury since 2003, and the three lending copies have been borrowed 43 times (this does not account for the in-library use of the restricted copy). The Christchurch College of Education has lent its six copies a total of 94 times in this period. The book has been in constant use by those training to be teachers, and especially, teachers of Māori language and culture. In obtaining information and ideas from teachers such as Barlow and Mead, students and teachers throughout New Zealand are also absorbing Best. In a more global context, a search for “Elsdon + Best” on two Google websites found a revealing number of pages. Google Scholar brought up 653 citations in scholarly articles, of which at least half were citing Best; Google Books delivered 804 pages, 120 of which were directly related to Best’s works.³⁹³ The first search found sites that posted whole articles by Best, including the influential 1913 piece on Io in *Man*, discussed earlier. Anthropologists from Marcel Mauss (1954) to Marshall Sahlins (1972) have continued to depend on Best’s writings - and translations - for information on traditional Māori society.³⁹⁴

³⁹³ The search was carried out on 9.3.2006.

³⁹⁴ See Mauss, Marcel, *The Gift* (1954), and Sahlins, Marshall, *Stone Age Economics*, 149ff (1972).

Conclusions:

This study has clearly shown that Best is a living presence in Māori conceptions of their traditional being in pre-contact society. In attempts to wrest control of their literary image - from Ngata and Buck onwards, to the kaupapa essentialists of the third millennium - no way has yet been found to expunge his foundational input. Nor has a balanced attempt to seriously weigh his influence emerged to date. It seems obvious that such work is essential to a balanced view of how Māori and Pākehā see themselves in our history. Further examination of post-1975 publications in a range of fields may yet show how extensive and deep-rooted is Te Peehi's influence on Māori constructions of their own being and identity. Beyond what it has been possible to discuss here, there exists a range of other literary genres where mauri is present, as examples of his influence on a wide range of Māori meanings. Best may be dead - but his mauri defies tradition and lives on in the mauri of those who inherit the writings.³⁹⁵ Like any cross-cultural and syncretistic formulation, mauri will continue to change over time as long as the forces that have caused its metamorphosis remain in operation.

This chapter has followed Best's developing definition of a spiritual term that has a vital place in contemporary Māori usage. It has been argued that in the

³⁹⁵ In the critical and theoretical sphere, Linda Tuhiwai Smith has challenged Best's theorization of Māori history (87) and the gendering of mauri, as a result of "Western classifications" (Smith, 1999a, 171). Mention has already been made of the coining of new words in the dictionary *Te Matatiki* (1996); the Best definition is the usual fare in such standard works as *The Reed Dictionary of Modern Māori* (1997). Reed's 1978 *Concise Maori Handbook* gives a pure Bestian version of mauri (95); the most recent general work on Māori mythology (Reed/Calman, 2004) has a story on the theft of a mauri stone that illustrates Best's description of such items as fertility charms in "The Forest Lore of the Maori". His bibliography contains thirteen books and articles by the ethnographer (Reed, Reed, & Calman, 2004, 499-500).

In literary criticism, Best's definitions of mauri have been used by Keri Hulme to underwrite "Mauri: an introduction to bicultural poetry in New Zealand" (Hulme, 1981-309). Hulme's theorisation of her own writing and that of contemporary Māori poetry draws not only on Best, but a number of other Pākehā sources (Orbell, Mitcalfe, Salmond, Schwimmer and Baxter) who have written on the Māori world. References to the "life-giving forces" of mauri appear in Witi Ihimaera's *The Whale Rider* (27, 1987).

transfer of knowledge and practice from an oral to a literate form of preservation, the incantatory qualities bound up in such practices as efficacious chants and prayers are either lost or so changed as to be unrecognisable. When the structure of a traditional society changes and breaks down under the impact of colonisation and Christian literacy, the meaning and practice of traditional religious rituals and forms undergo a radical metamorphosis. It seems axiomatic that the preservationist project by its very nature is part of the doom faced by the old ways. Any later ethnic revivalist movement has to take into account such factors before it can claim identity recovery is possible through retrieving traditional concepts and practices from unexamined literary sources.

To argue that the colonisers have (a) radically altered the traditional society in such a way that it needs resuscitation, without (b) accepting there is no way back to pristine forms is untenable. Attempting to write Best out of the record - or minimise his influence, without first assessing it - forces the ethnic essentialist to both deny the historical record and pretend that syncretism has no ongoing influence. If counter-hegemonic theory is to be taken seriously, it has to be seen for what it is: an attempt to wrest autonomy from Pākehā sources and interpretations. Revisionist views that deny or obscure Māori co-operation in the gathering and writing of these early records will ultimately prove unhelpful, and patronising towards Māori agency in the past, and the future.

Conclusion.

This project has considered a wide range of Elsdon Best's writings on Māori society, more particularly his views on their beliefs and customs in the pre-European era, especially esoteric religion and Māori spirituality in general. Best of course wrote widely on material culture - his considerable output in this area awaits further and vital investigations. The focus of this present study does not imply any separation of spiritual and material worlds for Māori prior to the arrival of Europeans; rather, it prioritises Best's ideological focus as a way of understanding his attraction to things Māori and assessing the importance of his ongoing influence. This relates to the two major premises of the thesis: that he sought a lost (or vanishing) Māori being (in the ontological sphere); and that his reconstruction of the authentic "old time Māori" has been absorbed into Māori and Pākehā thought, lately re-emerging in the essentialist strategies of the post-WW2 Māori renaissance.

This thesis has argued towards the conclusion that many advocates of such an essentialised Māori being are unaware of the half-life of Best's researches informing their own received versions of traditional Māori beliefs. It concludes that there was no realistic possibility of a late 19th century Māori epistemology unmediated by Pākehā influence. This is not the same as saying there were not worlds in which Māori at that time operated in a different existential realm to the settlers; rather, that the literary records of that era were on the whole produced by self-taught Pākehā intellectuals such as Best. Any post-mortem rejection of his methods and views that ignores such an influence can only help to obscure Māori realities at the time of their writing. Best has had a lasting effect on the writing of modern Māori identity, and if any of his shortcomings are to be exposed - and any invaluable research to be affirmed - this can only be done after the measured consideration of a massive amount of evidence.

It has been argued closely that important overseas theorists such as Tylor, Müeller and Spencer were powerful shapers of his world view and opinions, providing whatever theoretical models can be traced in his work. He accepted the major socio-evolutionary theories of his day, and these were powerful determinants in shaping his fieldwork - especially amongst Tuhoe in the Urewera - and creating his dominant paradigm: the mythopoetic Māori. His views of informants such as Tutakangahau of Maungapohatu - and the material they harvested for him - was also shaped by a romantic, backward-gazing vision of an essentialised Māori psychology. On a more speculative note, it is asserted here that Best's own identity needs were intimately bound up with his search for the "old time Māori"; thus the elegiac note his writing strikes on the cusp of a vanishing frontier culture of bi-lingual Pākehā adventurers and their authentic Māori men of old. It is argued that following on from these factors, the search for a pristine Māori nature from a vanished culture exoticised them in their present circumstances and contributed to a view of their disempowerment and inevitable extinction. The problems of agency have been examined: Māori were not passive in these exchanges but had little chance of gaining editorial input or control over the published matter. Men such as Tutakangahau were pragmatists, and some saw the need for literary transmission of their history, myth, beliefs and customs. Where men like Best and Smith used whakapapa to locate Māori in Western historical time, Tutakangahau and Rua Kenana - in very different ways - used biblical traditions of genealogy and prophecy to align their own past with a literate Christian modernity.

Best's views on Nature - and Māori in Nature - enabled him to indigenise his romanticism as he wrote of a natural world that provided an explanation of, and a site for, "primitive" psychology. The Urewera wilderness he saw as the last remaining bastion of New Zealand's primitive survivals: men who lived on the mental plane of his own Pākehā ancestors and provided the developing science of anthropology with a unique research opportunity that had to be grasped before it disappeared with the last of the old time Māori. A romantic view of nature entrenched the mythopoetic model of Maori, while

theorists such as Spencer provided a progressive, evolutionary model that explained their inability to adapt and assimilate European cultural forms - and thus they faced extinction. Best was inclined to project on Māori a view of savage nature and the savage in nature: one produced as much by his own culture as by anything he saw around him.

Māori then, according to Best, appear as part of a new mythology and praxis: part-imagination, part-field observation, subsumed in the emerging anthropology of race and empire. Fixing Māori origins located them in history; defining their nature, in evolutionary anthropology; and ranking their spirituality, in comparative religion. Producing this model helped to establish Pākehā intellectuals in the ownership of the new frontier, assimilating Māori points of difference. The Māori according to Best had to some degree at least, made Māori a version of Pākehā; yet ironically, the settlers were also redefining themselves in this process, changed and affected by the relationship while hardly being able to admit their own metamorphosis. The figure of Tutakangahau that emerges from the available literature examined here destabilises the persona created by Best: a wise but doomed figure, grieving for an irretrievable past. Best mediated the voices of men like this, but when the historical record is searched, a far more nuanced and located persona emerges.

This is in no way a claim that we have heard the “real” Tutakangahau in these fragments. Yet a clearly defined historical actor is seen in this more rounded portrait: compromised by military weakness; showing a desire to access Pākehā materials and technology; a pragmatist with a long record of local political action and skills in statecraft and diplomacy. His was a life of radical change consequent on the arrival of a European historical consciousness - but Best gives the reader little of this reality. He found a new self-definition as a local leader dealing with Pākehā officials and politicians; his attraction to Best as first, an administrator of Pākehā power in his own area of influence, and as time went by, a unique and useful intellectual peer, is unsurprising. Their fifteen-year friendship was an alliance of sorts, reflecting their complex and

often conflicting needs. The friction produced by these contending images invites an open mind to further consider the dynamics of such rich relationships at a crucial period in Tuhoe and national history.

Finally, this work argues that Best's literary legacy - especially in *The Williams' Dictionary of the Maori Language* - has had an enduring and ongoing influence in defining traditional Māori concepts. Through his scholarly and popular writings, he entered the national bloodstream and in spite of any later criticism devaluing his work, he is never far from the surface when issues of Māori identity and traditional life arise. His literary survival has informed the Māori renaissance and has entered into contemporary oral records. In attempting to define and fix spiritual terms that had their origin in traditional practice, he began a process of reinvention that continues in modern revisions. English lexicographical practice has bequeathed an etymology of terms such as *mauri*, that while technically accurate to some degree can never restore to succeeding generations the power and the practice of *karakia* that invoked such a *mauri* in traditional society.

His classification of the unclassifiable has led to a Pākehā-inflected version of pre-contact ritual practice becoming essential for Māori self-definition and understanding. The pristine nature of such concepts as *mauri* is taken for granted by some Māori writers in the post-colonial era that has produced a literary renaissance since WW2. The syncretistic processes at work in the production of such dictionary definitions stand in need of a much closer and rigorous examination. Best cannot be written out of the record, dismissed or minimised without a thorough reassessment - of which this study is a part. If counter-hegemonic theory is to be effective in its attempt to regain some autonomy for Māori, it cannot afford to deny or obscure the co-operation Best invited and attracted in gathering his material. Such denials will ultimately prove unhelpful: patronising to the ancestors who worked with Best, and unable to assist in establishing Māori agency in the past, in the present, and for the future. Best farewelled his own work and that of his informants in a

poroporoaki that appears on the last page of the first volume of *Tuhoe*. It is appropriate here to echo his salute:

“Tuhoe E! Tenei te mihi atu nei.”

Acknowledgements / Ngā mihimihi.

Ko te mihi tuatahi, ki te Runga rawa, nāna nei ngā mea katoa i hanga, kororia ki a ia. Glory to the Almighty One, our creator.

He mihi nui anō ki a Te Peehi rāua ko Tutakangahau, ngā ruānuku e rua o tō rāua iwi. Great respect is due to these two wise men of their peoples.

He mihi nunui anō ki a Tuhoe, te iwi Māori o te Urewera, arā ki te whaea Materoa Nikora nō Ruātoki, mō tana manaakitanga ki tēnei tauhou. Respect also to the people of Tuhoe, especially Materoa Nikora of Ruātoki, who showed hospitality to this stranger.

Ki taku rangatira mahi, ko Lyndsay Head: e te pūkenga, he hōhonu ōu whakaaro nui, he ngāwari tōu manawa. To my chief supervisor Lyndsay Head: for your depths of wisdom and patience. Ki a John Newton hoki, taku kaiārahi tuarua: To John Newton, my co-supervisor also.

Ki taku hoa rangatira, ki a Jeanette: e hoa, he maha ngā kākano o te reo Māori i ruia atu e koe, e puta mai, e whaihua a muri ake nei. To my wife, Jeanette: countless seeds of the Māori language, scattered, pushing through, bearing fruit.

Ki ngā pūkenga, ki ngā ākonga hoki o Te Tari Māori. To all the staff and students of the Māori Department who have helped me (and to the staff of IT, especially Colin and James). To all the campus librarians. Tēnā koutou katoa.

Ki te hunga mate: ki a Sam Gill (d. September 2004); ki a Edward Said (1935-2003). Remembering the dead whose work lives on in this work: Sam Gill, WASS tutor, and Edward Said, scholar.

APPENDICES:

CHAPTER 1.

Elsdon Best: Te Peehi documentary.

Shown on TV One, Waka Huia, Episode 12, 6th June 2005.

Producer and Interviewer: Hemana Waaka, Tawharau Productions. PO Box 200-172, Papatoetoe Central, New Zealand.

Interviewees:

PouTemara -Tuhoe educationalist.

Tamati Kruger - Tuhoe educationalist.

Wharehuia Milrory - Tuhoe educationalist.

Tama Nikora - Tuhoe kaumatua (elder).

Te Umu and Bill Williams - descendants of Tutakangahau, informant of Best.

Jeffrey Paparoa Holman - researcher.

Pou Temara introductory remarks.

Tamati Kruger:

Says Best was “was paid by Smith to write about Tuhoe...the first person so paid to write professionally about Māori (hei kaiutu – a quartermaster on the road that was being surveyed)”. Best disputed some of what the Government was doing – he favoured Tuhoe – and some of the soldiers wanted rid of him.

Tama Nikora:

“He was just interested in collecting stories – wasn’t factionalised”. Got a lot of stories from Waikaremona..Ruatoki... but none from Ohiwa, Waimana...”.

Wharehuia Milroy:

“Best grew up – with a childhood interest in Māori – had a desire to find out more – Tuhoe were on his doorstep – he wanted to write it all down to enhance his own reputation – stories he could reproduce – so others could find out what life was like for indigenous people – fired up by this idea “

“He was in the Land Court – listening to the stories – secretary to the Komihana (Urewera Commission) – he got involved with Māori Land Court – a scribe who wrote material down – stories about history – whare wānanga, karakia - because he was in the MLC he was able to take down the stories. Karakia were not given in MLC, but the histories, the stories, tikanga (customs) were described..”

“Nobody had done anything on Tuhoe – Tuhoe were regarded as the real deal - genuine Māori.”

Pou Temara:

In the Commission (Komihana) as the Secretary he found out about whakapapa in the process of asking for information regarding ownership. Smith was there with Best as scribe – he really liked these stories – really enthralled, kernels of knowledge that he heard and wrote down. Some people say he got them wrong. But Best wrote down everything – if he was just a scribe, either the kaumatua got it wrong, or they were telling false stories, misleading the Commission. Why would he write down something wrong?

Wharehuia Milroy:

These people (like Best) who were collecting stories – had to live close, with Tuhoe - he went right in and lived with them – they accepted him for who he was. He understood what they were saying – he was able to get much information (except karakia) because “Ko te reo Māori tangata whenua rawa atu” – not a native speaker, but extremely fluent. Many Tuhoe didn’t know how to write or speak English – Best got close to them through his ability to transcribe Māori and translate it into English.

Te Umu and Bill Williams:

Speaking about their Whakapapa - Tutakangahau.

Hemana Waaka:

Kaumatua got hoha – with Best writing longhand. Too slow.

Pou Temara:

On Best's shorthand. When the kaumataua were reciting information, he would have to say "taihoa, taihao – wait wait!" "He was losing the wairua – so he developed a special shorthand".

Wharehuia Milroy:

On Tutakangahau – notes about war, agriculture, one of Wharehuia's ancestors (Makarini) spoke to Best. Had learned to read and write in Māori from the missionaries at Opotiki, but not in English - Best would translate into English. He knew all the tribal history – Best could see he was important. Some of the information he had, he didn't give to Best "I know that some things written down by my ancestor he didn't give to Best, because they're not in Best's work but I have them. They are not the same as the ones he gave to Best. His ancestor gave differing versions - some things he would give to Best, others not".

Te Matorohanga – Biggs (Bruce) got some stories – about Io. – being a Christian analogue. Wharehuia has a book written by an ancestor from Waikaremoana with Io in the whakapapa – this didn't come from the bible, or a Pākehā source. He believes

Best missed out on really following this thing on Io – it's not as if the koroua missed out on telling him this kōrero about Io. Best couldn't believe that a Māori mind could have this idea (of a supreme being). He didn't believe Māori could come up with monotheism – Io was in the kōrero. Te Matorohanga wrote it down. It's in all the tribal areas. Te Matorohanga was the just the first to write it down - Best didn't want to touch it. The ancestors didn't want to let all their knowledge out, to go out of tribal areas.

Pou Temara:

Paitini: Best stayed with him and Makurata, at Maungapohatu, where Paitini was taught by his elders. Pou Temara's koroua learnt from Paitini. Paitini died in 1939. Knew over 500 waiata.

Hemana Waaka:

How did Best get started on writing *Tuhoe*?

Tama Nikora:

He listened - he did an amazing job, one that couldn't be done today.

Te Umu and Bill Williams:

Best was an expert bushman, self-sufficient, knew how to survive in the bush. He knew how to mill his own timber, to build his own whare. He went everywhere. They speak of him with respect.

Jeffrey Paparoa Holman – speaking about Best's relationship with Tutakangahau.

Tama Nikora

– Publication of *Tuhoe* -

Wharehuia Milroy:

He'd heard koroua in the 1960s and 1970s – kids of the informants of Best – some had even seen Best. They said "some of the stories in the book aren't the same as the ones we've heard in the villages" – so perhaps he put his own spin on these kōrero – it was long time afterwards he wrote this book (*Tuhoe*). Wharehuia has heard a lot of disagreement especially about whakapapa in the book – "if anyone followed one of these they'd get it wrong. We have to follow our own whakapapa books".

Hemana Waaka

Even though Best was fluent, he was still a Pākehā.

Pou Temara:

Best was proud – whakahhihi. He was alive at a time when Tuhoe had all these knowledgeable men; yet whenever when Pākehā came to visit, Best would get up and do the whaikōrero. Pou disputes that his language was as good as any of the koroua (Tutakangahau etc) – he thought he knew more

than them, but he didn't really. Didn't have the depth of whakatauki (proverbs) – he was really after increasing his own mana (status).

Pākehā thought he was great, and Best was vain too. "If he was whakahihi, we can't say he had one foot in the Māori world and one in the Pākehā – if he had a foot in the Māori world, he would not have been so proud. He had both feet in the Pakeha world. He thought he knew more than he did.

Notes transcribed from extempore (?) translation provided by Jeanette King, watching the video and giving commentary, precis and some verbatim translation of significant points.

December 5th 2005.

Chapter 5. The Māori According to Best.

This list of books gives a picture of Best's library, and mental furniture, in preparing his major manuscript on Māori religion.

Annotated Bibliography, from Best's documents at Te Papa Archives.

MU000084. Research notes on Animism (c1929 ?) R-1M03-127G 5.

This Folder goes under the name of "Animism", but is actually a list of Best's major influences – undated, but a pencil note on P1 says, "taken for No. 10" – that is, Monograph 10, *Maori Religion and Mythology* (1924).

P1 *Animism*, Edward Clodd.

Origin of religion, 11.

Personification, 44-45.

Hau, cf. 36-37.

Wairua and hau, cf. 41. Spiritual concepts, 85.

Sense of fear exploited by priests, cf. 47.

Karakia and offerings, 50.

Supreme Being too (?) exalted, 55.

Nature worship. Poetry of, 82.

P2. Lists sections from Tylor's *Primitive Culture*, Vol 1. Mythology.

Nature myths 248, 285, 287, 309, "are mythopoetic concepts".

Myth turned into history, 249; myths of savages survive in higher places, 257; origins, 257, 332, (caused by love of marvellous. Mental irresponsibility and desire to account for phenomena), *cite Harehare, Rua* (my italics) – does me mean Kenana?

P3. Same source, Animism, 384, as origin of myths, 258; Personification, 260; A includes *wairua and hau, perhaps mauri* (my italics), 384.

P4. *Prim Cult* Vol 2.

Atua, wairua. Terms awe, wairua, hamomo (?), i.e., wairua carry some sense of lightness, core (?) and shadow.

Moral god. Ev. Of worship of. 300.301.302.

Rehu o Tainui. *Only detailed a/c of origin of low type atua.* (my italics)

Supreme Being. 304-305.

[Tohunga kept Io cult &

" " does not punish 306

perf. of its rituals in their

" " produces other gods. 309-313

own hands in self aggrandisement,

" "

like all priesthoods.]

Io. Tutaka's remarks. Cf. pp 305-309 Bold type is Best's handwritten annotation on Tylor, concerning supreme beings in primitive culture.

NB – this above footnote is important, as it shows Best conflating his anti-hierarchical psychology and antipathy to Christian belief in a projection onto the imagined status and attitudes of the supposed esoteric Maori priesthood who worshipped Io but kept him from the masses.

Lubbock, (1912), *The Origin of Civilisation*.

There were sections of Maori in this book. "Maori of a high type", 280; life or mauri in all things, 245.

Best notes "Lubbock, Tylor accept all evidence apparently, much of which must be unreliable, as see in works on Maori".

Best was plainly aware that the “armchair” experts were vulnerable to suspect local material, on which they based some of their theorising. So if the Maori material was dodgy, why wasn’t he more cautious of the global inferences?

Marrett, *Anthropology*.

“tapu is a series of don’ts”, 215, 219.

Wairua, 229, 230/3. 232.

Monotheism. Primitive. See Jevons *Comparative Religion* p118 on.

Idea of supreme being borrowed from Xtianity.....119.

The Natives of Sarawak and British North Borneo, H.L.Roth, London, 1896.

Vol 1. Best is looking for comparisons with Maori eg, planting season marked by Pleiades.

Primitive Culture/Tylor again. P9.

P10. “Political power in hands of a priesthood or church an evil thing. Public and private morality have improved since people took power of dictation from churches”.

Human Origins, S. Laing.

Evolution of the Idea of God. G. Allen.

Lists of ideas taken from Allen, eg, “people may outgrow religion” (141).

Anthropological Religion, M. Muller. (selected page refs).

All religions evolved; no revelation, v.

God can be recognised by deep thinkers of any race, vi.

Missionary methods, xix-3.

Other religions may possess virtues, 2-59.

Examination of religion discouraged, 3.

Free study of religion desirable, 6.

Relig. Intolerance a modern growth, 17. Christianity intolerant, 58.

Toleration in religion, 18.29.39.40.

Relig. & Morality evolved slowly, 59.

Abstract terms denote concrete objects behind, 233.

Divine element in man, 111.351.352.353.364.

India the home of philosophy, 354.

Savage customs not primitive, 150.

Whare potae, 280.

Martyrdom of Man. (??)

Origin of religion, 164, 280; man made gods, 168.176. 178.

Unequal conditions cause progress, 506.

War and slavery assisted progress, 502-505.

Personification, origin of, 172.

The Rise of Man, by Col. C.R. Couder, London, 1908.

All religions founded on previous systems, 250.

Christianity borrows from paganism, 335.

No pure race or language, 73.

The Sacred Tree, Mrs J H Philpott.

Tree worship, 22; cosmogonic tree, 109-119; mauri of new house, 156.

Notes:

In savage & barbaric life the bases of natural science are laid in the affinity and acquaintance with nature.

The dominion of the priest over his fellow men has ever fettered human mentality, and has tended to preserve alive superstition, and prevent advancement. Thus races sink into a torpid condition brought about by a superstition-ridden religion.

Ratzel (?), History of Mankind.

Modern Man & his Forerunners, H G Spurrell.

EB notes, "see also marked passages throughout. Go through for arts, on social customs and development of Civilisation".

Survival and Degeneration, 6.

Origin of high thinking, 51.

Among people in com. Stage no internal struggle for existence, only bet. (?) communities, 91.

Successful civilisations are tolerant and adaptable. 109-120.

Decay of religions. How, 131.

Democracies. Weakness of. 147-148-150 On

Reversion to primitive communism 167.

Science opposed by Religion, 135-136.

Ancient Society, Morgan.

Institutions originated in savagery, vi-4-8.

Religion. Origin of, 5.

Primitive savages do not exist, 7.

Culture stages, 9.

Polynesians are savages, 10-16-17.

Savagery the longest culture stage, 38-39.

Gentile (?) organization unknown to Polynesian.

Law replaces clan action in redressing wrongs, 293.

The Belief in Immortality. Vol 1. J G Frazer

Polytheism caused by personification of natural phenomena, p20. Note that Gould says it eventually leads to a belief in a Sup. Being.

Two phases of faith in God, 23.

Polytheism, 11.

Causality leads to concept of Sup. Being, 22.

Comparative Anthropology} Should not be mixed in any work, p230.

Descriptive “ “ } }

Hau. Cf p 267-268.

Wairua 269.

“ “ comes from spirit world to guide thither spirits of dead rel. 300.

Tapu, 327-390-408.

Mana, 380.381.

Man Past and Present, A H Keane.

Pottery of Melanesia. Where made. 144.

Mana of Melanesia, 145.

Mentawi (?) natives resemble Polynesians, 235.

Religion of Ancient Palestine, S A Cook. Religions Anc. & Modern Series.

“The Oriental mind has always been able and willing to accept the incredible and the contradictory”.

Psychology and Folk Lore, R R Marett.

Survivals in folk lore. Meaning of. 2.25.

Socia; anthropology and Primitive mentality, 4.

Are survivals in all culture stages, 14.

Why civilisations decay, 26.

“ barbaric man is ruthless, 27.

Church hostile to science of anthropology.

Psyche's Task, J G Frazer.

Of methods of lower races, author writes, “From false premises he often arrives at sound conclusions; from chimerical theory he deduces a salutary practice”. NB, Best on Maori, justifying, explaining.

The study of savage and barbaric peoples is necessary for our understanding of the human mind.

This work explains advantages derived from the powers of superstitious belief, p154.

It has been observed that in certain cases, religious scepticism tends to undermine foundations of civil society. Cf case of Maori, p7.

Persecution arises when Church and State are joined. P?.

Majority of people in civilised communities still in intellectual savagery, 170.

A Handbook of Indian Art, E B Havell (?), Howell (?), London, 1920.

Brahma/Creator/symbol=rising sun.

Lingam now used as symbol of the Creator.

Cf Tane as Creator and Tane: male, male element. Also Fornander's note on stone (?phallic) at Hawaii.

Vishnu – his bride is the Dawn Maiden Ushas (cf. uha).

Te Haka a Tamerore (?) resembles the 'sun dance' of India and Europe.

P177. "in the Rig-Veda one can follow the logical sequence of our Aryan progenitors' deep investigations into the phenomena of life, and the religious theories they based upon them....and in the grand hymn X.29 of the Rig Veda the Aryan seers propounded the theory of the first cause, and the nature of the Great Unknown Spirit which was the starting point of the late philosophical school:

There was not Existence nor non.Existence;
The Kingdom of Air nor the Sky beyond.
What was there to contain, to cover in
Were there but vast unfathom'd depths of Water?

There was no Death there, nor Immortality;
No Sun was there, dividing Day from Night;
Then was there only That resting within Itself;
Apart from It there was not anything.

At first within the Darkness veiled in Darkness,
 Chaos unknowable, the All lay hid;
 When sudden from the formless Void emerging,
 By the great power of Heat was born that Germ.

Thereafter came Desire, the primal root of Mind;
 Being from non-Being sprung, our Rishis tell;
 But came the vital power from earth of heaven?
 What hidden force impelled this parting here?

Who knows whence this was born or how it came?
 The gods themselves are later than this time –
 He only, the Creator, truly knoweth this,
 And even He, perhaps, may know it not.

Origin and Development of Religious Belief, S Baring Gould. Vol 1.

Spiritual consciousness in savage man, 43.

Sun personifications, 106.

Personification & Animatism, see. P137-239. *

Priests become parasites, 195.

Karakia, interesting parallel, 218.

Pre-Christian infant baptism, 399.

Allegorical myths, 161.

Personification, 239. *

Origin of religion, 238.

Form and Colour, L M Phillips.

[J McD, pencilled. ?? J McDonald? Best did go on trips with him, and he took pictures, e.g. up the Wanganui River, 1921].

36, " The intellectual faculty of the East has become atrophied owing to an exclusive cultivation of the emotional faculty."

37, "The East is permanently and at heart emotional, the West permanently and at heart intellectual."

62, "The Celtic race is full of poetry, is soaked and brimming over with the poetic sentiment, but it has always been unequal to the creation of important and monumental works of poetry because it has not been reinforced by our intellectual capacity capable of supplying the form, the argument, the architectonic or structural quality which is essential to poetry of first-rate importance".

54, "Eastern literature and Eastern art represent emotional not intellectual characteristics. Oriental spiritual concepts are endless but Oriental history is paltry, riddled with the marvellous. Sound work of historian, archaeologist, anthropologist etc quite unknown in the East. Sound work in government unknown in east; no able democracy. **Irish are Asiatic in mentality.**

59, "In Architecture, the West is practical, the East indulges in fantastic, eccentric designs. The involved designs of **some Maori carved work is essentially Oriental**; it reminds one of some Indian work. Western art is strong in form, Eastern art in colour and bizarre effect. Author shows that architecture etc expresses **racial character.**"

P100, "Indian art exhibits an indifference amounting to absolute contempt for Nature and her laws". Cf their weird images with many limbs with **grotesque Maori forms**. The Indian mentality and train of thought led to above conditions. They despised Nature.

P278, Spiritual effect of Nature. "The recognition of this divine intention in nature is almost always the work of our greatest poets and of our greatest poets at their greatest".

Chapter 8 appendices:

Appendix A: Mauri, sources in Best.

"Maori Omens and Superstitions", JPS Vol VII:27, 1898, pp 119-20; "The Spiritual Concepts of the Maori", JPS Vol X:37, March 1901, pp 1-19; "Food Products of Tuhoeland", Transactions of the New Zealand Institute, Vol

XXXV, 1902, p69; Transactions of the NZ Inst, Vol 42, 1909: pp 433-481; Notebook 11 – from ATL, 1911-12, QMS-0191 (qMS 191, qMS 193-194), pp 199 – 293; Preface to the 5th edition of William's Maori Dictionary (1917), pp v-xvi.

The Maori (1924), *The Maori as he was* (1924) and *Maori Religion and Mythology Part 1* (1924), *The Maori Canoe* (1925), *Maori Agriculture* (1925), *The Pa Maori* (1927), and post-mortem publications, *Fishing methods and devices of the Maori* (1929, 1986), *Maori Religion and Mythology Part 2* (1929, 1982).

Sources influenced by Best: Modern (post WW2):

Dictionaries:

The Reed Dictionary of Modern Māori (1995, 1997), ed., P M Ryan; *Te Matatiki: contemporary Māori Words* (1996), Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori.

Critical, educational:

Te Ao Hurihuri (1975), ed., Michael King; *Tikanga Whakaaro: key concepts in Māori culture* (1991,1994), Cleve Barlow; *Decolonising Methodologies* (1999), Linda Tuhiwai Smith; *Tikanga Māori: living by Māori values* (2003), Hirini Moko Mead; *Reed Book of Māori Mythology* (2004), ed., Ross Calman. *Ki te whaiaio: an introduction to Māori culture and society* (2004), Tania Ka'ai.

Theological:

The Woven Universe: selected Writings of Rev, Māori Marsden (2003), ed., Charles Royal.

Appendix B:

Best in the *JPS*, as cited in Williams Dictionary of the Māori Language, 5th ed.,(1917). (list taken from "Spiritual Concepts of the Maori", *JPS*, Vol IX:36, May 1901, p 177).

Wairua. (p 560), 1, Spirit – J. ii, 122.

Hau. (pp 46-47), (iv), n. 1. Vitality of man, J. ix, 189-99; J. ii, 223; J. ix, 197. 2. Hau whitia and kai hau – “evils arising from the misappropriation of property”. Williams notes that there may be a connection between this word and hau (v) following – but that this definition is “most essentially spiritual and intangible, while **hau** (v) is the material visible symbol of something”. Hau (v) n. 1. Food (ceremonial); 2. Portion of one slain in battle etc. 3. “Twigs of **karamuramu**, used in divination rites, apparently to represent tribes or clans about to engage in battle. // J. ix, 193, and note to **hau** (iv).” (this information appears a year later in “Notes on the Art of War”, *JPS* Vol XI: 41, March 1902, pp 89-90).

(apa hau, and kumanga kai) *

Mauri. (p 102), J. vii, 121. 2. Source of the emotions...**oho mauri**, start suddenly; **mauri rere**, panic stricken; **mauri tau**, absence of panic.

Manawa, n. 1. Belly, bowels, J. x, 7, &c. 2. Bowels of the earth (J. ii, 224). Kehua and kikokiko.

Ngākau.(pp 264-265), 1. n Vitals, viscera (It is questionable whether it should be applied to the physical heart). J.xx, 17. 4. [request for assistance in making war]. The **ngakau** might be an article sent, a song sung, &c. (/ /J. xii, 41).

(Ate, Hinengaro, Ata, Ahua)*

Māwe, (pp 230-231), māwe (i) 3. An object used by the seer to represent an article which has been stolen...to recover [it] by magic rites. [See, at length, Best, J. x, 15, xii, 147.] This reference to Best relates to the 1902 Journal.

Ariā (pp18-19) 1.5, Imaginary presence connected with anything [touched]...which therefore might serve as a medium (J. ii, 103); and 1.7, A wand of **karamu** used as a medium...to relieve a **taua** [war party] from the disabilities under the law of **tapu** &c / /J. x, 17-19. (and kohiwi)*.

* terms in 1901 article not illustrated from Best in 1917 edition.

End of Chapter Appendices. Addenda 1.

Best's Books: Annotations made by Elsdon Best to his own books.

Noted by Jeffrey Paparoa Holman, 8th. Dec 2003, at Hard To Find Books Auckland. Courtesy of Warwick Jordan, who bought many of these items at a sale in August 2003, of the books of Zita and Elsdon Craig (Best's grand-nephew).

Te Ika a Maui, or New Zealand and its Inhabitants, Rev Richard Taylor, 1870. 2nd edition, London, William Macintosh/H. Ireson Jones, Wanganui, New Zealand. MDCCCLXX.

Signed: Elsdon Best - book plate inside cover, Vite sine literis mors est. (top); Un clavo saca otro clavo. (r); Patukina, a, ku (corrected in pencil by Best to "kua") tuwhera kia koutou. (bottom); Knowledge is power.

"Elsdon Best" Dated: 1879 Place: Fort Manaia.³⁹⁶
Also signed on p1.

NB: Notes in [] brackets are marks by Best in text, thus [?] is his query, not mine.

P2, top para beg "attained,....the human family." Has a [?].

P11, illustration, "He ko kuti," ...corrected, "ko ku/o/ti".

Chapter II, "The Two Races which peopled Polynesia".

P14, Footnote + Beg. "He pokeke...Ka tika" has note, "See W.5 p439. "W.5" = Williams Maori Dictionary 5th ed 1917, ref to Taamaka, a round cord. NB. Best had this Taylor in 1879, and he's annotating it with refs from a 1917 edition of Williams - which indicates he was still re-reading (and had unfinished business with) Taylor nearly 40 years later.

p17, Beg. "and the two races....intermingled" (his underlining), "rubbish!".

P18, last para. "It is, however...such a degraded race could..." [!], his underlining.

³⁹⁶ See Craig, 1964, p28.

p21, beg. "whilst the latter possesses....unknown to the other." All scribbled out, and a reference to "the grand events in Scripture - the Fall, the Flood, the Dispersion, and the Temple-" marked "Humbug!".

P24, ref to the boomerang being of Egyptian origin "??". Ref to "Brachmins" who came to "India from Egypt" queried. [?].

P25, beg "The word *Maori*, or *Mauri*....equivalent to that of nigger with us", has "Mauri" crossed out and para scrawled through.

p26, Para "In tracing...they came from." "Sandwich Isles" is crossed out, and a section on the derivation of Hawaiki from the "name of the countryonly its small side", scrawled out.

p27, end of first para, ref to the sun's rays being vertical attracts [?].

P29, corrects Hotchstetter quote from "rough hewn blocks" to "rough **** blocks".

P30, para beginning "The ruins...and frequent." attracts [?].

P31, correction to "Kiuwai" to "Kui-wai" (Best often corrects what he believes to be misspellings of Maori).

P36, first para, "The Maori...large animals on which they rode." attracts [?].

P37, para cont'd from 36 on Maori and Chinese links, writes of flagstones at the foot of the pou in a wharenuui, where a fire burnt "in honour of their great ancestor" ...Best notes, "Rot!".

P44, When a Maori chief died...interred likewise" - para has a line down left margin.

p46, ref to links between America and Egypt, last para. Writes, "no".

P47, burial of chiefs, sometimes in canoes," elevated on poles, as if the double memory of the grove and the deluge were thus preserved". Attracts [?]. Best does not seem to have detected the reference to the biblical Flood, or does he?

P49, section 2 section on Hindu/Maori widows, pencil line on right.

p50, section 10, on Aborigines and Maori as "devil worshippers", attracts [!]. Last para, quotes a Major Macpherson on "Maories, they never repair their houses," line to left.

p51, section 3, section on tohungas naming children, lined on right.

p52, note 10, on travellers offering prayers in sacred groves, "prayer" underlined, "no".

P53, section 14 “Meru” underlined and corrected to “Miru”.

P54, section 4, [?] on women mourning at a tangi.

p56, “no” to comment on Maori and beards. Last para, Melanesian and Polynesian migration, both entered the Pacific from contrary directions” [underlined], [?], “G” p57, G = Gudgeon?

P57, queries [?] on all paras, lines “also China, Japan, the Philippines”; “until they reached the shores of New Zealand”....“without having any idea of agriculture”; “but especially in the buildings he erected...”.

P58. para one, on Polynesian migration, supplanting Melanesians here first, who “once owned a civilisation equal to his own” (Whateley / degeneration?). Best writes “Rot!”. Last para, on psychic unity of mankind, and God’s plan in human dispersals (See Acts 17:26, Paul on Mars Hill, speaks of mankind made of “one blood”, and having “the times and boundaries of their habitations” appointed by God. Best lines it on the left, with [?]. Unaware of this reference, he cannot fathom where Taylor is coming from.

Chapter III, “Our Race and its Origins”.

p65, second para, man as the last link “in the creation” [underlined]...in the present day.” Lined down left. Next para, Taylor asserts “what geology affirms, God’s holy word declares...etc”, eliciting “Bosh!” from Best. Last para states, “The Bible is by far the most ancient record existing...”[lined on left, ?] and this argument continues over onto...

P66....as Taylor argues that Egyptian, Hindu or Chinese literature contain “puerile myths” without the antiquity of Scripture, with “nothing to invalidate the scriptural account of man’s creation”. This attracts, a line to left, a large [?], and the exasperated comment, “And this man Taylor an M.A.!”. NB: This is the remark Craig cites in his 1964 biography of Best (pp27-28), which shows he had the book at the time of writing - and F Max Muller’s “Anthropological Religion”, also listed in Appendix II as annotated by Best.³⁹⁷

³⁹⁷ Craig’s version of the annotation is “And this man is a Master of Arts” – meaning either Best repeated his criticism somewhere else, or that Craig does not always

More [?!] follow, especially for the second paragraph, where Taylor argues against the doctrine of progressive human advancement and evolutionary theory.

p67, Taylors discusses Crawford and Darwin, and has a paragraph on human unity after the Flood, which Best lines and queries [?] - does he not get the reference?

P71, comment on Maori and Egyptians, and colour sense. Lined to right.

p76, second para, [!], last para on Europeans being fair-skinned because they cover themselves, lined, [?].

P79, Aversion of different races to those of another skin tone, whites' disgust at own bodies, attraction to the brown form, lined on right. (Seems pretty dubious, we agree, Mr Best). Third para on biblical accounts of city building and development of the arts in Genesis - lined on right, "Myths". End of para, argument against man's original state of savagery [!! On left], but a tendency to retrograde: "He did so when he first fell..." (First underlined, note reads "Rot!"). Taylor goes on, "The Maori is an example, he has retrograded", his migrations having cut him off from his former civilised habits [!], and concludes, in general, "so many sections of the human family have thus fallen from civilisation into barbarism" [?]. This is a perfect statement of the degenerationalist position, which Best will spend the rest of his career arguing against.

P80, following two paras are diffusionist theory of links, language, arts, and crackpot speculations by Taylor on boomerangs deriving from Egypt. Both lined to left: "not reliable".

P81, diffusion of all peoples from a common centre in antiquity, dispersion from Chaldea - sentence on the descendants of Ham scribbled out, "no good" to right. Third para on Japhet scrawled out, "myth" on right. Collision of Best's developing anthropological ideas and biblical view of human origins and dispersal.

p82, history of Shem, moving towards the Euphrates, as far east as the Ganges - Taylor says even the Chinese claim Noah as "their reputed founder, Fo or

quote accurately. Certainly the quote comes in a discussion of Best's reaction to the book, given to him by Smith or Tregear (27).

Foah." He goes on to claim that "traces of Noah are to be found in the Polynesian isles as well as in Asia", to which Best adds, "Rubbish" and scrawls it out. The next para traces Polynesians back to Assyria (scribbled over) and the next again, tracks Hamitic ancestors down to New Zealand, "and thus, at this moment, the descendants of Shem, Ham and Japhet are meeting together in the remote islands of the sea" (all scribbled out). This is very much akin to what Edward Tregear would write in *The Aryan Maori* (1885).

P85, last para, follow over onto...

P86, a discussion of the influence of the "children of Ham", the earliest civilisations (Egypt etc, = black), replete with "most of the comforts of modern civilization"... while the "white was then but a wandering savage"....all scribbled out. Best plainly objected to Taylor's conviction of the modern European's indebtedness to "the coloured race...for all those articial means of support".

P87, Taylor goes on to attribute the development of commerce to "the same race" - sentence crossed out; he ends this para figuring the sons of Ham as "the lord of the creation", also scrawled over. Similarly, the third para, Ham as a cultural missionary to Japhet, this section is crossed out: "Japhet from those of Ham". In the last para. more crossings out, espec. a sentence on the works of Ham's four sons.

p88, para two, Taylor writes of the degeneracy of the Hamitic line in his day, under the curse of Noah (see Genesis 9:18-29). He notes how the descendants of Shem and Japhet have enslaved Ham's line, and Maori themselves, "the brown race of New Zealand has done the same with its first sable colonists". Best scrawls all over this section. (He was later to change his mind on a pre-Maori wave of Melanesian migrants).

p89, he continues on the Semitic dispensation, and how God took human form in this line, thus Shem became "a teacher to his brethren in Africa and Europe". Best objects to his next statement, that the "chief teachers of the world arose from him: Zoroaster as well as Moses; Christ the Messiah, the true light; and Mahomet, the false prophet". Best adds [!].

Taylor continues - last para, over to...

P90, "God is pleased to restore Japhet to his birth-right...." so he becomes "the world's teacher, the dispenser of God's will...and the three sons of Noah shall again be united, as the members of one family...". Best scrawls this out entirely.

Chapter IV, "Civilization".

P92, para two, beg, "The first man...his own safety" [scrawled out]. Cain's search for security after expulsion.

p95, last section on slavery, [!] beside "this noble proof"; "Christian States" underlined; [?] on R of "the spread of God's Word (the grand source of / / civilization)" [!] on L.

p96, Maori and civilisation, first para, "This was especially observable after (crossed out) he had received the Gospel." ["before" in L margin].

Start next para, "Christianity has led to ^ union....." ^^ inserted "wars and much bloodshed and savagery".

Chapter V, "Religion".

P99, last sentence of last para, "The moon and stars were revered by a section of the Maori race...", lined to R.

p100, second para on Christian proof being preserved in Maori myth, [?] before "thus the creation of the world, man, and his fall, are to be discovered even in the Maori myths".

End of last para, Maui's death related to fall of Adam and Eve, lined on L.

New para [over onto 101], begins "The propitiating God.....Scriptural truth to be discerned", leads into a discussion of expiation and sacrifice, which Best has annotated,

"Alas!The trail of the missionary is over it all".

P101, contd. Taylor cites Maori practice of expiation, "another fragment of Scripture seen, in evident allusion to the scape goat". Best writes "Rot!"

Second para, "In the Wharekura...Rehoboam" scrawled out.

Comparison of Tawaki to Christ, espec. in the transfiguration ["Bosh"] and

the ascension.

Last para, "there are remnants of a knowledge of the Saviour pervading the whole of Polynesia". ["Humbug"]

p102, Melanesians and Osiris, later Polynesian arrivals,"was mixed up with their recollections of their Messiah" [all crossed out]. [!]

Second para, on tohunga and medicines, "medical virtues" [?] and "no".

P104, first para, on effects of forgetting God, same for all races. [!]

Next para on spells and charms, and sacrifices, beg "The Maori gods.....appease their wrath", lined to L, Best conceding, "Right for once".

Mid para, beg "The nearest....relatives...have their natures changed by death...become malignant....", lined to L, Best agrees again, "Right".

P105, "*tieki*" corrected to "*tieke*".

First new para, summary on Polynesian religion, Taylor commits an anachronism, whether the source of the their beliefs came via "Suez or Panama, much may be said for each". Best notes acidly, "It came by Panama on the old 'Nevada' ". (Was this a vessel he travelled on?)

Last para, some amateur philology, lined R, [?].

Chapter VI, "Mythology".

P111, second para on Hawaiki, scrawled over.

Creation chant corrected, "Ngae [pea", crossed out], "Ko [toe", corrected to "=toi"]].

P112, sect 4, "Ko Tauira, (trs as) Religion", Religion crossed out.

p116, second para, "Tahu, author of good", corrected to "food".

P117, "2nd line, "Pepeki" corrected to "Pepeke". NB - Best seems to have begun a lifelong habit of proofreading Maori in texts, and correcting them after the fact.

P118, name of newborn, he potiki, "or a gift of Tiki from the Po or Hades", [?].

P123, Maui and death, his death read as "sin" by Taylor, Best says "no" and [?].

P125 Maui as the "Maori Hercules" [tick]; killing Tunarua, part of the monster's body thrown on the ground, springs up as kareao/supplejack,

[tick].

Chapter VII, "Mythology" (continued)

p134, derivation of the word "Atua", Best comments, "Bosh". A "thievish dog was *he kuri atua*, a god-like dog" [?]. A "child who pilfered was *he tamaiti atua*, a divine child" [divine crossed out, note, "Rot"].

P147, "The rainbow was exclusively the property of Uenuku". [no]

second para, heroes becoming stars, chiefs consuming the slain, [no, no].

P148, gods as powerful enemies "rendered harmless [inserts 'and helpless'] by the aid of charms and spells".

P157, minor corrections.

Chapter VIII, "Tapu".

P168, male tapu sanctity, could not eat with wives, children, lined on L.

p169, second para, rendering a place tapu, down to "influence of the family were at stake". Lined on R.

p170, last para on journeys, lined on L, 'travelling'?

Then follows a Tupeke, reputedly uttered by a tohunga to make a vessel noa; Best crosses out the whole translation in (unusually) blue pencil, writes "Bosh", and on the L margin, "He peruperu tenei".

P171, top para lined on R, karakia below as footnote has first three translated lines scrawled, two in pencil, last in blue pencil, and "shadow" crossed out in last line.

p173, comments on chiefs and drinking slain opponents blood, "no" on L, [?] on R.

Chapter IX, "Whare-Kura".

P174, Whare kura as a place where "all the tribes....[met]..for worship", [Bosh!].

P177, Rehoboam and Kauika compared, breaking "the staff of peace and

unity....[a people] ..without letters, they could not be expected to preserve a fuller account".

["Bosh" on L]

p183, Maori unwillingness to repeat karakia, because of their inherent power to give "the evil spirit" an opening. He is speaking here of "Christianized natives" - Best lines the passage R, and does not seem to object to the observation.

p184, The passage continues over the page, concerning the responses to karakia, including sounds of insects, birds, wind etc...and Best notes, "cf Hare Hongi's remark". No ref given, so when did he meet Hongi/Stowell?

Second para, passage on Baptism and the tohi rite, lined on L, [?]; a naming karakia, [?] to L of following passage.

p186, second para on confirmation, dedication to Tu, writes "Tohi" on L. Corrects "te au" to "te hau" in karakia.

p187, "After the battle...enemies". Weapons kept in house [?]; breaking of weapons [?].

"Ko tamangemange o Tu. The many sacred things of Tu". [?].

P188, second para queried, "sacred rules of tapu" [?]; power of priest to kill with his utterances to a transgressor, "Go away! Go away!", lined on L.

p189, second karakia, "Homai taku tu kia numia - Give me my strength to abide", ["no!"].

"Long and strong anger and flaming" crossed out and [?] and next line queried [?].

Next two paras on war have 5x [?], "to thank their gods".

P190, "The war party of Tu comes from the stinking place [crossed out], "no" on L. Trs. of all last passage, "I haere mai i runga.....ki reira", all crossed out. [?] at beginning of last para on tohunga.

p191, first para on tohunga and food cooked for him by slaves, [?].

Pp192-193. A number of [?]'s on words and phrases, mainly disagreements with Taylor's trs, but no alternatives offered.

Chapter X, "Fishing Ceremonies".

P196, First para, on unmentionable karakia, excrement on fish hooks, lined on

L.

Disputes trans of "E ki konei hoki koe" as "Soon will your trunk depart" "Ka wano te tama nei" (being made into a canoe)....[?].

P204, second para, bewitching, esp. preachers, lined on L, and [!], by passage on those who had died after failing to makutu missionaries in Otaki. Taylor attributes this failure and others to the protection and "greater power of our God."

P205, second para, divination by means sticks, "this was called Niu". Taylor compares this with the Greeks and OT examples, eg, Hosea iv. 12. Best crosses this out firmly.

Chapter XIV, "Traditions and Legends".

Large numbers of minor corrections, but comments disappear until p280, a battle in the Manawatu, involving Pohea and Tamangakau, who sail south "and in the morning they reached the "Ika a maru and slept there". Best notes at L, "Te Ika a Maru/old pa maioro/Jim McManaman's (? Unsure of name)/homestead near/Ohau Bay".

P286, "Tradition of Taka", concerning a chief who died with all his ope on the Rangi po road. Best notes, "Poss. all Taka's ope did not perish hence con. bet. Matatua & Whanganui natives". (?? Can't decipher "con.bet.").

P290, + footnote on Ranga tapu. Stones found here like "English flints", flakes used as knives, left by old ovens, " a proof of their having belonged to a more ancient race than the Polynesians". Best scibbles this out, writes ["Bosh"].

Chapter XVI, "Wakatauki, or Proverbs".

P294, number 9, Best scribbles out the unlikely observation that "Toi toi is synonymous with the English word toy".

P300, number 70, "Te wai Toki i te rangi", "Cook's water from heaven", ie, rum. Best underlines Toki and suggests, "toke? Wai toke was very sweet." [?]

Chapter XVIII, "Personal Ornaments".

P320, speculates again on black slaves (of Maori), fighting with their lighter coloured masters - the masters "used charcoal to make it appear they were all one". [?]

Section on NAMES, p328, on names that appear to be blasphemous or obscene, end of para two, crossed out, and ["Rot!"] on L.

p329, "The name for religion is *Rakau Tapu*, the sacred tree,....their most ancient form of worship was that of the tree or grove". [?]

P330, last para, on Adam naming the animals and plants, carries over to p331. First section is scrawled out with a looping, vigorous cloverleaf covering half a page, and the annotation, "**Why introduce so many Western myths and superstitions**". Underlines "degraded races" on p331. [!]

Chapter XXI, "Seasons".

P369, FIRE, second para, Best has scrawled it all out - a linking of the place where Elijah called down fire in his battle with the priests of Baal (Mohrakaha, the place of burning) with a phrase supposedly having the same meaning in Maori, "*Mo ra ka ha*, being literally in that language, for the sun to consume with his breath".

Chapter XXII, "Language".

P375, Best corrects Taylor's explanation of reduplication, eg, "Kino, bad, kikino very bad", B. writes, "plural", same for "Pai/papai".

Second para, comments on early English attempts to pronounce Maori, and bastardised transliterations eg, "Wairarapa" mangled into "*Widderup*", which Best corrects as "*Wyedrup*".

p376, lack of *nga* in Hawaiki, "which is regarded as the cradle of their race.....", lined on L. [?].

P377, differential pronunciation of Maori over NZ, "in the Middle Island, the *ng* is also dropped in tangata, which is pronounced taata, as in some of the

isles". [?]

Chapter XXIII, "Origin, as traced by Language".

P386, variations on "hine" gets a line L and [?].

P389, Last para, " The carnal intercourse of atuas and females is the common belief of both races (Maori and Tongans), ^^....", Best inserts, "as of Xtians", in ref to Genesis 6:1-4?

P393, 2nd para, preservation of dialectal variations as clues to origins, ref to similarity of Hawaiki to Hawaii, whole passage scribbled out, Best writes ["No"] and [?] to the expression, " *Hawaiki i te moutere*, supposing this to have been Easter Island".

P394, last para, relating the whakapapa and origins of Hahakai, a chief and tohunga at Parapara around 1840, who spoke of ancestors coming from three kumara covered islands to the East, where there was no warfare - to which Best retorts, ["Bosh"].

P395, speaks of cannibalism and tattoing being late inventions - the former claim Best labels, ["Rubbish"].

Chapter XXIV, "Maori Middens".

Pp418-419, sightings of Moa, all mention scribbled out (Nelson, 1863)...Best writes that the man who reported the sighting was "Maling, who made the moa tracks".

P420, discusses prehistoric remains in England, and goes on the assertion of psychic unity, and thus the truth of Scripture, and how the Bible is a rock for Christian hopes. Best scrawls this out and writes ["Rubbish"].

Chapter XXV, "The Age of New Zealand".

P425, writes of New Zealand submerged in the Flood, lined on R, [?]

P443, second para, Moa sightings again, Best writes, after much cross-hatching of offending section, " Maling said in after days it was a hoax. He himself made the prints"[!].

Chapter XXIX, "Means of Support".

P508, pictures of Maori Weapons, writes ["no"].

Chapter XXXI, "Te Rauparaha and Rangihaeata".

P540, corrects "Horokiri" and then writes "stet" on R, "Kiri is correct" L. Was he ever a proofreader?

P541, when Te Rauparaha died at Otaki, the minister was unwilling to read the burial service of the Church (of England) as "he was not baptized". Best notes with a [!].

On Te Rauparaha's character, Taylor says he was always good to the whalers and traders, "and in no instance have I heard of his doing any one of them injury...", [?].

P542, Taylor says of him, "he did not possess the light which we do", [?].

Chapter XXXIV, "Natural History of New Zealand".

P603, the Moa hoax again, "Mr Malling discovered their footprints"..["a hoax"].

Then, in second para, "The bones of the this bird are found widely spread, but further notice is deferred until one is actually captured....." [Scrawled out]. Following pp, various technical corrections on bird and animal species, and some Maori words. Proves he read the whole book - but the corrections are petering out once language, religion, origins and customs etc are dealt with, in the first 2/3 of the book.

Chapter XXXVII, "Botany".

P694, Note on the Puriri tree, Best glosses, " found at & south of White Cliffs & to Waipaoa River P.B. on E. Coast".

Chapter XXXVIII, "Chronology".

P706, Cook and his rum again, "*Te wai toki a rangi*" - (Cook's sweet water of heaven) - glossed as "toke?" again.

P711, final para in chronology, Taylor claims three epochs in New Zealand history: "First, its colonisation by the black race (crossed out by Best); Secondly, by the Maori; and lastly, by the Anglo-Saxon".

The Waikato War, together with some account of Te Kooti Rikirangi, by John Featon (new edition, revised by Captain Gilbert Mair). Brett & Co, Auckland, 1924.

Signed "Elsdon Best, 1924" and later bookplate, "EX LIBRIS ELSDON CRAIG".

Best's pencil notes on inside cover, "Regts" (army) and pages to find refs to them, plus an ominous "Errata 143".

These are mainly literals and Maori words misspelled - there is only one impassioned "Bosh!" in the book, on p227, objecting to this passage on Tuhoe, "These slips, slides and overwhelms, the treacherous avalanche, [?] and blinding snowstorms, obliterate the devious and little used track, to the utter bewilderment, discomfiture, and probable death of the unfortunate wayfarer or fugitive from exposure, cold or famine. There are many of the miserable Urewera denizens of the lake, accustomed to the journey and climate, met their end while striving to escape Ruatahuna on our advance and occupation of their pa, and as tradition has it, many hundreds of the primeval Maoris, old time invaders of the Urewera, lie entombed amid the mountain fastnesses." [?]

Comment on R margin "Bosh!"

This section written by Mair - Best seems to be objecting to Mair's poor local knowledge and suspect speculations about earlier "invaders" ...?

The Story of Aotea, by Rev T G Hammond, Christchurch, Lyttelton Times, 1924.

sgd, "Elsdon Best, from H.Fildes, March 1924".

Tipped in presentation letter at rear, from Fildes to Best, critical of the book. Fildes was author of "The Last of the Ngati Mamoe."

Letter-

"Please accept with my comps. story of Aotea first appeared in cols. Hawea and Normanby Star during 1916. No doubt written in the years that lay before & certainly should have been revised for book form.

With all due respect to Mr Hammond there are matters in this book that even I can take exception to ^ -and what of you? [^pencilled 'as far as read']

He is like me and old Blenheim-ite & his father, David, ex "Lord Auckland" at Nelson 1842, was one of the Wairau Survey Party but had providentially been detached from the massacred early.

H. Fildes.

Obtainable from Ferguson & Osborne L.2. 6/-. The blue ear-pendant shades to green by night light. Something occult there." [?]

Is he talking about something Best has given him?

Few annotation by Best (corrections to Maori, a few [?], but no significant notes. However, there is a note, ink, stuck in by "H.F" on p77, reads,

"Awhi o Rangi is supposed to be buried with a lot of Maori manuscripts, in a tribal (Nga rauru) burial vault at Tauranga ika, near Waitotara."

This follows on from Chapter X, a discussion of the "god-faced axes" brought from Hawaiki, pp73-78.

P204, Hammond is talking about Maori representation of the sacred resembling biblical models (eg, the golden calf). Best lines para on L, and underlines, "representations of all their sacred ideas", without further comment.

pp230-231, section on makutu and tohunga, second para, 230, "tio" on L, next to sentence, "some hair or remnants of a garment that belonged to the person he sought to destroy."

Second para of p231, lined to R, "T" next to biblical ref, Deut. 27:17. "Cursed be he that removeth his neighbour's landmark."

"The Maori Race", by Edward Tregear, A D Willis, Wanganui, New Zealand, 1904.

(personal collection, Warwick Jordan, Hard to Find Books)

Note from Tregear on title page, "Elsdon Best, with all good wishes from the Author. Edw. Tregear 13.10.04 See next page and "Acknowledgments".

"Dedicated to Elsdon Best, Keen Scholar, and True Lover of the Maori People."

Letter to Best from Tregear, 22nd July 1904, asking his to approve the above dedication, tipped into endpapers.

Letter describes book as a compilation, an "account of customs, religions, wars etc", and hopes Best will have "no reason to be ashamed of it. Percy Smith ^^ who has seen the 'revise sheets' says it is just the book that was wanted".

He goes on, "To no other student of Maori are we enquirers so deeply indebted in these latter days as to yourself; I have said so in the book and only express general opinion among thinkers."

He concludes that the printer "has got the covers out from Home" (ie, England).

Review pasted into rear endpapers, very favourable. Another clipping from The Triad, December 1904, Vol. 12 No. 9, is not so generous. Obiter Dicta [by

the Editor] opines, "I put the book down with a feeling of disappointment...". (see photocopy / scanned text).

P40, facing, picture of soil cultivation with the ko. Best's inked list of men on back of picture, reads, "Photo taken at Ohiramoko. Ruatahuna. Natives are Paitini, Te Manihera, Pahiri, Matutaera & ano(?)."

Numerous non-specific [?]'s and minor corrections follow - nothing like the venom with which he directs at Taylor.

p105, "Agriculture was properly taught to the chiefs in the University." [?] "no, only the karakia".

P112, "tapairu" [?] and ref to p 152, "Tapairu", a firstborn girl who became a "high priestess".

P161, "Nomenclature" - "Maori names hideously travestied by the colonist.." (See similar ref in Taylor, p375.) "Wairarapa, Wydrop" etc.

p386, Chapter XVI, "Whare Kura", "Burial etc", Tregear states that death for Maori was "more trying than for the ordinary European who may be upborne by the belief in brighter realms beyond"; Maori in general saw "only grey shadows in the land of the future". Best underlines the first quote above, and wrotes ["no"] L.

p387, he lines R most of the page, and has a [?] on the final para about the spirit of the deceased.

p410, "The Future World", note on L. "E.B; then "Wöhlers" beside section on the spirits of the dead living on the banks of a lake. (Rev Wöhlers of Murihiku?).

Chapter XIX, Myths and Traditions".

P434, Section on floods, traditions or allusions to "the deluge or deluges". Tane commissions two men "Parawhenuamea and Tupu-nui-a-uta to visit motals, who had forgotten the true doctrine as to the creation etc.". Lined on L., [?] Their prayers brought a seven month period of rain and a huge flood...lined on L., ["Bosh"].

Best does not like any biblical allusions - not that Tregear was any kind of believer, being deeply hostile to the churches also. (see Howe, 1991, Singer in a Songless Land).

Chapter XX, "Religion and Cosmogony".

P464, discussion of divergent accounts of human creation - Tane taking red clay and making "a model in the image of man at Hawaiki...breathing on the figure, the clay came to life". Large [?] on L.

p467, top, "Ra the Sun-god, was one of the children of Light (*whanau marama*).". Best writes in ink, "not a child of Light".

P470, a footnote to chapter (12) refs to Savage, p100. "Some Accounts of New Zealand. J. Savage, 1807."

"Mr Savage remarks that the Maoris worshipped the sun, moon and stars, and", 'when paying adoration to the rising sun the arms are spread bowed' " etc, which Best lines and crosses (X) on L, with the emphatic comment (in ink) "Rubbish! They were performing a haka."

P570, "Former Inhabitants"

"The ancient pa known as Nga-toko-ono (between Fisherman's Bay and Paua Bay)...". Notes Best "my bay".

"*Williams Maori Dictionary*", by Herbert W Williams, MA, Marcus F Marks, Government Printer, Wellington, 1917, 5th edition.

Signed to Best by Williams, "Elsdon Best from the author: an inadequate return for much invaluable assistance." Signed in front endpaper, "Elsdon W G Craig, N Z Herald".

Best is not shy of adding corrections to Williams - the pronunciation of the vowel "a" he disputes with HWW "**a**, pronounced *a* as in 'flora'." Best writes "no". Similar disagreement with vowel "e".

He also corrects what he feels are incorrect examples, eg p336, "pikipiki" 6.

Shutting down like a lid". Ka rere te manu ki runga, na ka tiriho ki raro, kaore e pokipoki nga paihau (*When the kite is flying aloft it will swoop down; the wings will not come down flat*)."

Best comments, "This was a bird, not a kite. See 8 = 175". (note 8 on p175 does not seem to relate?).

"Pakeha Rambles Through Maori Lands", by Lieut.-Colonel St. John (New Zealand Militia), Wellington, Robert Burrett, 1873.

Book plate, and signed by "E. Best, Waikohu, 1878" (Taranaki?-period as Native Constable?)

Signed again, p4, "Elsdon Best, Ruatoki. 14.1.07".

St John's account of his military career in New Zealand. Best had it quite early, and was still consulting it in the Urewera.

P49, note at bottom of page, "Cf. killing of (N)-ngarara of Whakatane in J.P.Soc."

P60, [?] on "the female branch of the family are considered the property of the mother's tribe....", para lined to L. and over onto p61.

p133, Near Tauranga in the 1860s (Check dates), he gives an account of Maori children at some form of Native school, not being allowed to speak Maori, but having to work in English. Children aged 6-16, St John observes the teacher (M, P?) proud "he did not know a word of Maori". (132-133) He argues it is a good example of the new government scheme "in opposition to the boarding system introduced by the missionaries".

p193, Comments on the appearance and physique of Urewera fighters - some who "look like the negro", others "have a perfect Jewish cast of countenance"; "Mountain and bush bred, they are as active as cats....".

"The Adventures of Kimble Bent", by James Cowan, Whitcombe and Tombs, London and Melbourne, Christchurch, Wellington and Dunedin, N.Z., 1911.

Signed in front endpapers, "Ki a Elsdon Best na tona hoa na J.Cowan -

Poneke, 6/1/12".

With bookplate, "Ex Libris Elsdon Craig". 149 Mt Albert Road, Auckland.

Chapter V, "Te Ua, Priest and Prophet".

Best seems in agreement with much of Cowan's representation of Te Ua and Pai Marire - many underlinings, but no [?]'s.

pp43-46.

43- "curious medley of Maori and English"; 44- "incantations and chants he professed to have heard from supernatural visitants"; "charms and magic formulae"; 45- "And many deluded Hauhau fell to the rifles of the white men...the efficacy of the charm was shaken...if the *pakeha* bullet refused to be waved aside...it was because the stricken man had lost faith in the *karakia*.."; "Hepanaia and fifty of his red-painted braves.."; 46- "No; it was just utter blind bravery, a sheer trust in a mad creed of Death-to-the-Whites and Maori Land for the Maori Race". Lined on L.

Chapter VIII, "The Hauhau Council Town".

pp80-81. "Round this staff of worship....Strange procession , chanting their wild psalms [underlined]."

81 "amazing mixtures of English and Maori; some were all pidgin-English [u/l], softened by the melodious Maori tongue[u/l]."

P82, "And so on....a marvellous farrago of Maorified English words and phrases" [u/l].

P83, "The more warlike chants ended in a loudly barked '*Hau!*', the watchword and holy war-cry of the // to p84 rebel bushmen. [u/l] Very wild they were, these savage hymns, haunting in rhythm, and stirring the people to a frenzy of fanatic fire". [lined to L.]

"Where the White Man Treads Across the Pathway of the Maori" (revised edition), by W.B. (William Baucke), Wilson & Horton, Auckland, 1928. (selected from articles in the NZ Weekly News and the The Auckland Weekly

News).

Signed on front endpaper, "He tohu mahara mo taku hoa mahi Elsdon Best Na to hoa aroha na Wm Baucke Otorohanga Jan 1st 1929". Not signed by Best, but was his copy - usual pencil corrections - not many of significance.

Letter from Baucke to Best tipped in rear endpapers.

"Otorohanga Jan. 1st 1929.

Dear Mr Best Sorry that this tohu mahara comes to you rather belated. Otira e taea te aha i te maha o nga raruraru o tenei wa o te tau. Do not imagine yourself not frequently thought of. All the usual seasons greetings, sent with a right good heart. Yours ever the same. Wm. Baucke. More probably later concerning the issue of this book."

No marks after p37, of 300 - doubtful if Best finished it, as he couldn't help himself if a correction suggested itself.

"The Maori as he was: a brief account of Maori Life as it was in Pre-European Days", by Elsdon Best, Wellington, N.Z. Dominion Museum. 1924.

New Zealand Board of Science and Art. Manual No.4.

Best's own copy, book plate at front,

"With the compliments of The Board of Maori Ethnological Research Parliament Buildings, Wellington, New Zealand"

Sgd on Preface page, "Elsdon Best".

No notes.

Ex Libris, Elsdon Craig.

"Reminiscences and Maori Stories", by Captain Gilbert Mair, NZC, The Brett

Printing and Publishing Company, Auckland, 1923.

Endpapers, "EB, from ARA (?) 13.6.24" [wife]. Sgd, "Elsdon Best".

Frontispiece photo of Mair "at last resting place of Captain Travers and White" ...at Orangikawa Pa. Tahahoata, by James Cowan, January 24, 1921."

Best crosses out White and writes "Lieut White was buried at Hukanui".

P8, At Rotorua, Mair writes of an old Warrior Wehi-Peihana, who is the first to volunteer to go on a mission against Waikato, "the very first man to offer was a grey-haired tattooed warrior named Wehi-Peihana ("The Frightened Pheasant), about seventy years of age".

Best comments in ink, in L margin, "No. The Maori rendering of 'Vespasian'. What Maori ever put an adjective before a noun".

Over on p9, he crosses out the same error below a picture of Wehi-Peihana ("The Frightened Pheasant.) And Best corrects again, "No. Wehipeihana is for Vespasian".

P23. Third para, "...and he met Tauputaputa". Best on R, "Tao-putaputa in Gudgeon's version. J.P.S vol 14(/) 15."

P97, Patch of purple prose describing a battle with Hauhau that turns out to a family of sleeping wild pigs in an abandoned whare! Best comments on R, "Good man Tawa! But overdone." Ref to Tawa?Mair?

"*Maori Religion and Mythology*", by Elsdon Best, Section 1. Bulletin No 10, Dominion Museum, Wellington, Government Printer, 1924.

sgd, "with the compliments of Elsdon Best" & inscribed "Elsdon W G Craig 1936". Best's own copy, passed on to Craig (by wife? Best died 1931).

P2, Best lines "the third volume of the *Memoirs of the Polynesian Society* contains the only detailed account of the native belief in a Supreme Being....".

P2, second last para, "The principles and precepts of Maori religion....entered". All lined on L.

p3, "A long residence in their midst...ritual formulae and ritual occurrences".

Qualifications for gaining confidence of Maori, as an ethnographer - if this is Best and not Craig (the pencilling has his hallmarks) - he seems to be annotating his own published work to remind himself of what is important? P5, Best has surveyed a number of 19th century thinkers of the definition of religion, then writes, "The fact is we hold different views on this subject, hence we are writing at cross purposes, and no satisfactory conclusion can be come to until we agree as to what constitutes religion." Lined to R., "Unscientific!". Craig's marks.

NB- close study of Best's writing on the front page, compared with Craig's (especially W's, and F's) makes it certain - and logical - that these are Craig's annotations.

p7, first para on section beginning, "Evidence concerning Religions of Lower Races" - Buller's statement that the "Maori had no religion" and Taylor's that they were "devil-worshippers" are challenged by Best on the basis that "neither had any true knowledge of native beliefs. The road was closed to them for two reasons: the white man did not want to learn, the brown man had no desire to teach him".

This last sentence is glossed by Craig, "Whatahoro's statement".

Next para, "The difficulties encountered.....indeed, the writer has slowly arrived at the conclusion that but few persons are fitted for the task [*of collecting ethnographic data*], simple though it may appear".

Craig writes, "Qualifications" - of the ethnographer, presumably.

p8, second para, comments on Elkington's admission that it was difficult for amateur and missionary collector-ethnographers to work out inconsistencies of their subject's religious temper (in *The Savage South Seas*). Best writes, "This writer need not have voyaged to the far Solomons to discover such inconsistencies; he might have studied the Bible."

Lined to L by Craig, "Religious views".

End of next para, a quote from Max Muller, last sentence lined on L, "God".

It is likely Craig was using this book to think through Best's views on Maori and religion when he preparing the biography in the 1960s. There are a

number of other sections lined to the side, but no further comments.

p10, "A great deal of good -missionaries - man strives in vain". Against forcing sudden change on human nature.

p11, second para, all lined R. "We may note...forbears (sic)." Comment by Best on the waning of belief in Hell.

p13, first para, "Many minds cannot grasp....Christianity borrowed them ready-made". Christians originally borrowed superstitions and rites from primitive peoples, not the other way around. Lined R.

second para, development of modern Christianity. Lined R.

p14, first para, growth of dissent in religion, "nonconformists" u/l, lined L.

End of para, reason purifying a superstitious OT cultus, lined L.

Next para, lined L, "Religion is here to stay; our manifest duty is to purify it".

P15, second para, "This highly objectionable belief...slowly expunged". Lined R, comment on Christians and other belief systems.

p16, all three paras lined L - do Christians alone have the truth, religious progress slow, sects resistant to change, detachment needed in study Maori beliefs, "without preconceived notions or teachings to mar our judgment".

All of these marks indicate Craig trying to get a grasp of his great-uncle's mindset for the biography. There are a few small literal corrections in heavier pencil, by Best - and some underlining on pp 55-56, pp107-108, and pp213-215, but no further comments.

PART II.

Best books and others, owned by K McF of Auckland (owner did not wish to named).

NB: All the above books formerly purchased by Warwick Jordan have been onsold to the buyer above (email, K McF, 4.8.2007).

Legends of the Maori and Personal Reminiscences etc by

the Late Colonel Porter, L M Isitt, Christchurch, 1925.

The Maori Vols I & II, Harry H Tombs, Wellington, 1924.

The Art of War etc, Best's collected writings bound, owned by Gudgeon - see below.

Maori Pamphlets, Vol 9: Elsdon Best, bound copies of Best's writings from the Transactions and others. see below.

Dominion Museum monographs, nos 1-6, by Elsdon Best - sgd to Adelaide, see below.

Fishing Methods and Devices of the Maori, by Elsdon Best, Dominion Museum Bulletin, Wellington, 1929.

The Stone Implements of the Maori, Dominion Museum Monograph No 4, Wellington, 1912. NB. Includes list of "Authorities" at front, including Taylor, with comments on their value.

Dominion Museum Bulletins 1, 2 & 3, Wellington, 1905/06. 1: Geological Survey, James Hector. 2: Fishing and Sea-Foods of the Ancient Maori, A.Hamilton. 1908. 3: The Maori Pa at the New Zealand Exhibition, A. Hamilton, 1911. Sgd by Best.

Maori Agriculture, Bulletin No 9, Elsdon Best, Dominion Museum/ The Maori Board of Ethnological Research, Whitcombe and Tombs, Wellington, 1925.

1. *Maori Agriculture, bulletin 9.*

p27, pasted slip, written in ink by Best, commenting on the plate showing five spades/ko.

"a straight shafted spade with triangular blade and an attached foot-tread like a teka is still used in [the/crossed] Mesopotamia". Comment on Maori origins (1925 +).

2. *Legends of the Maori etc/Porter.*

sgd "Elsdon Best 18.8.1926".

P14, [?] on supposed similarity between a name in Palestine "Mohrakaha (the

place of burning)" and the a Maori expression with the "same meaning, Mo-ra-ka-ha, meaning for the sun to consume with his breath...". [!] NB - this query of Best's is the same as one in Taylor's *Te Ika* 40 years previously...no doubt Porter cribbed the ref from Taylor.

p31, "Nearly a thousand years ago there lived in this land..." Best notes "24 gens" on R.

- continues with various corrections to names and grammar of Maori.

pp56-58, The Story of a Cannon. An offender executed with a combination of Maori justice, Christian influence and a Pakeha cannon. Story told by Major Ropata to Porter, on the history of the howitzer *Te Pu i Ripekatia te Kohuru* (The cannon that crucified the murderer).

Porter notes that the story, taking place in 1826, would have had the offender punished for a murder "according to Maori custom, but the law of the Gospel had been received". Best [?] "in 1826". Ropata is claiming the influence of a kaiwhakaako (Maori lay teacher) in suggesting crucifixion for the offender, which Best doubts.

p69, Legend of Motu-Tapu-te Ranga.

Best writes on L margin in ink,

"Given by Eria Tutara-kauika, son of Raukura. See "Tuhoe" p 201. This tale is unreliable. Matatua never came south. E.B."

P73, Note at bottom by Porter, on arrival of Mataatua canoe 900 years before, and 250 before "the second greater migration of the many tribal canoes".

Best notes, "no" to New Zealand being uninhabited before Maori came, and "no, not the least proof of this" to Porter's dating.

Rear endpapers, pasted review of book, "18-9-26, E.Post". Did Best write it? No real clue.

3. *Maori Pamphlets*, Vol 9, E.Best.

Conts -

i) Social Usages of the Maori, WEA Lecture, 1918.

ii) Articles from the Transactions of the New Zealand Institute

-Maori Origins, 2 parts, 1899.

- Customs and Superstitions of the Maori (Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science, 1898), read before them.
- Food Products of Tuhoeland., Auckland Institute, 1902.
- Art of the Whare Pora, Auck Inst, 1898. NB p629, **karakia from Tutakanga-hau.**
- Maori Marriage Customs, Auck Inst 1903.
- The Whare Tapere, Auck Inst, 1901. **NB-Annotations by Craig**, pp76-77. p77, last para, "note Best's home at Ruatoki"....p77,comment on magic and tapu, "note..." see photocopy??
- Maori Folk-lore, Trans of the Aust Assoc for the Adv of Science. Dunedin, 1904.
- Maori Religion, pub. as above, read before them, dated Brisbane, James Cumming, Govt Printer, 1910.
- Topographical Nomenclature of the Maori, Extract, NZ Official Year Book, Govt Printer, Wellington, 1919.

4. *The Art of War etc*, Best - Gudgeon's copy, collected and bound writings of Best, "Bound by Leighton and Son, High St Auckland", nd.

sgd "W.Gudgeon on front endpaper. Includes

- Social Usages of the Maori, WEA lecture, 1918.
- notes on Maori Religion (copy Brisbane 1910 paper, see above Aust).
- Notes on the Custom of Rahui (*JPS*? Looks like it, but no clue).
- Colonial report on the Cook Island, no 13, 1899 - Gudgeon's.
- Cook Islands Agriculture, report, 1903.
- Maori Forest Lore, Best, Art XXXII, read at Auck Inst, 1908, *JPS*? Trans?
- Maori Medical Lore, Pt I, by Elsdon Best of Tuhoe Land.
- The Lore of the Whare-Kohanga, Part I by Elsdon Best. Part II: Pregnancy. Part III. Tuatanga Tamariki, The Tua Rite. all *JPS*.
- contd. The Lore of the WK, *JPS*, Vol XVI No 1, part V, Miscellaneous Items.
- Spiritual Concepts of the Maori, Part I, by Elsdon Best, of Rua-tahuna, Tuhoe-Land.

- The Uhi-Maori, or Native Tatting Instruments, By EB of TL.
- material from Buller, Hansard.
- Notes on the Arts of War, pts I-VII, + supplementary notes.

5. *Dominion Museum Monographs, Nos 1-6.* Elsdon Best.

NB - copy signed by EB to "Mary Adelaide Best He tohu aroha na tona tane Elsdon Best"

Contains all above monographs, but few annotations.

Maori Myth and Religion... Monograph 1.

P29 "Religion is a form of government [u/l]....toit enters into every department of life...[u/l]." lined to R. By ??

P30, top para, "The childhood of mankind....maturity". Lined to L, by Craig
p32, Maori search for origins, lined to L, "The Maori has sought to discover and explain...the soul of man". Craig?

P33, end of third para, "...the end is near" [u/l], lined to R.

I suspect this is Craig again, looking for Best's religious ideas for the biography.

Astronomical Knowledge... Monograph 3.

P23 "Taylor's star-notes in *Te Ika a Maui* are sadly jumbled. Few men have been field worker's in Maori lore...". Craig's pencil, lined to R and [u/l].

Polynesian Voyagers.... Monograph 5.

P29. Paper slip in pages in Craig's pencil, "Best on drifts".

The Maori School of Learning... Monograph 6.

P28, Lined to L. "The mentality of the Maori is of a very strange quality. He is

not of us, nor yet of our time; he is the Oriental mystic; he is a survival of a past age. Like the moa of his own land he is passing away..." (Craig's pencil, MY underlining).

6. *Fishing Methods and Devices of the Maori*, Elsdon Best. Dom Mus Bulletin no 12, 1929.

Skinner Govt Print, Wellington.

sgd "Elsdon Best".

Has note at end on Authorities quoted, plus 23 korero ika by Taare Tiako of Rapaki, in Maori.

7. *The Stone Implements of the Maori, Bulletin No 4*, by Elsdon Best, Govt Print, Wellington, 1912. Dominion Museum.

sgs "Elsdon Best."

Two Reviews in front endpaper, see photocopy. Lytt Times 24.1.14. NZ Herald 22.11.13.

P41, mention of Tuhoe and stone, a living rock..."We have been informed by a man of the Tuhoe tribe,..." u/l and lined R by ? Craig?

P42, Note commenting on WB's "Where the White Man Treads" ...a "delightful book". "I once asked my oracle, Kaha....." for information on making stone axes. Was this a spiritual guide also? Poetic use of "oracle".

Addenda 2: Elsdon Best: Elegist in Search of a Poetic

(from **ka mate ka ora** : a New Zealand journal of poetry and poetics, issue 2, july 2006). url:

http://www.nzepc.auckland.ac.nz/kmko/02/ka_mate02_holman.asp

A discussion of Elsdon Best's poetry, and its place in his oeuvre.

Elsdon Best: Elegist in Search of a Poetic . Jeffrey Paparoa Holman.

1. Making up the mauri: Elsdon Best and the making of the Williams' *Dictionary of the Māori Language* 1844-1917

Last year the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa brought back into print after a 20-year lapse eleven titles by their former official ethnographer, Elsdon Best (1856-1931). It is difficult to think of another New Zealand writer of his period who today might be accorded such a vote of confidence. Eleven scholarly non-fiction titles devoted to traditional Māori culture, written before 1930, arriving in a crowded marketplace at the beginning of a new millennium: what persuaded Te Papa to take such a commercial risk? Their news release tells us 'his research was based on rare first-hand knowledge, wide reading, informed study and close discussion with Māori'. Without Best, they write, 'we would know little of the customs and traditions of these times'. If this is indeed the case, then Elsdon Best must be counted as one of the country's major literary figures, given that Māori and Pākehā identity, issues of indigenous knowledge and intellectual property are crowding conventional historiography off the campus and the literary pages. Elsdon Best, long neglected and frowned upon for his extinctionist intellectual framework, is anointed again by the National Museum as an indispensable resource for knowledge of traditional Māori society. What do we know of this man and his life's work, given that he is so seminal? The first part of this essay examines Best's writing through his public persona as an ethnographer; the second looks at the poetry he published, to gain fresh perspectives on his complex psychology.

Elsdon Best never intended his works to be used in assisting Māori to know who they were in 2005: he believed the authentic old-time Māori would disappear, replaced at best by a 'brown-paper' version of the true men of old. Indigenous knowledge was his prime concern, but not to validate Māori being; rather, it was to save the vanishing knowledge of the old ways, in the best 19th century tradition of salvage anthropology (Stocking 78-109). He certainly believed in intellectual property, yet the concept of Māori ownership of what he recorded and published was antithetical to his mission. The science of an advancing civilisation now owned such historic resources, in a similar manner to the way in which the settlers had come to own the best land. The conversion of oral knowledge into literary texts implied a form of intellectual property exchange, analogous to the way title deeds of Māori land were issued by the Native Land Court in order to expedite sale to Europeans. The Museum owned the written knowledge, as they have proven by continuing to republish until today.

The significant irony here is that Best, like any writer, has been unable to control the post-mortem uses of his output. Today, the kaupapa Māori movement sprung from the cultural renaissance of the 1970s has reappropriated those parts of Best's writing that fit with their guiding philosophy: 'by Māori, for Māori and (often) in Māori' (Smith 1998). While many of the movement's leading lights, from Maori Marsden in the early 1970s to Pita Sharples today, would undoubtedly find the racialised underpinnings of Best's cultural hierarchies distasteful, his influence is ubiquitous in their fields of study simply because he is the prime literary recorder of traditional Māori society. That he got certain things wrong, that many of his views are now passé, that he appropriated Māori knowledge to further his own career: all of this is up for debate and further study, but Best as an ancestor figure in the field, and in New Zealand literature in general, needs taking seriously. Those commentators who have nodded in his direction (Walker 25, 40, 194; Smith 79-85) do not engage with his background, his sources and the significance of his subterranean presence in all recent works on traditional culture.

For biographical detail, the excellent study written by Best's grand-nephew Elsdon Craig remains the standard resource. Forty years on, *Man of the Mist* (1964) is in need of revision but the basic facts are there, and the narrative shape of the life. The *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, both in print and online, also has a useful thumbnail sketch by Jeffrey Sissons (2006). The principal features of Best's extraordinary life that need bearing in mind are his early and continual exposure to a raw frontier society, where he learned young to enjoy his own company, to live and survive in the native bush that surrounded his parents' farm at Tawa near Wellington, and his access to local Māori at the Porirua pa (village). Best played with Māori children and was exposed to Māori society during the period 1855-65 when Māori still held a numerical ascendancy and had not been subjected militarily by superior Western technology. His limited education (he passed the junior civil service examination at the age of 17), his inability to endure the confinement of offices and his love of the outdoors led him into a career as a bushworker and sawmiller, along with a stint as a volunteer with the Armed Constabulary.

It was in 1881, while taking part in operations against Parihaka, the stronghold of the pacifist Māori prophet Te Whiti, that Best made his first contacts with two of the group of men who were later to form the influential Polynesian Society: Percy Smith and Edward Tregear. He began to read more widely in areas related to Māori history and culture, and gained exposure to developing anthropological theory. A three-year sojourn in the United States during the mid-1880s saw him work in the same kinds of industries; he also travelled widely, learned Spanish and saw for himself the effects of westward expansion on indigenous American peoples. On his return, he began submitting articles based on his American travels to New Zealand newspapers. When the Polynesian Society was formed in Wellington in January 1892, he was a foundation member, dedicated to the preservation of all that related to 'Polynesian anthropology, ethnology, philology, history, manners and customs' (Sorrenson 24). His first serious scholarly article, 'The Races of the Philippines (I & II)' was published the same year, and so began

an association with this body of frontier intellectuals that was to continue until his death in 1931 (JPS 1 [1892]: 7-19, 118-25, 194-201). The piece was remarkable in that it contained the seeds of his theoretical influences (such as Edward Tylor and Herbert Spencer), weighty material he had studied alone after hard days working in the bush or in sawmills; and as evidence of his natural facility for learning languages, having read Spanish academic and historical writing in the original.

There were new universities in New Zealand at this time, but Best had never matriculated, and was not of the right class to gain entry. There was a thriving culture of Philosophical Societies in centres large and small, and men such as Best, along with some educated professionals, read their learned papers to each other and published the results each year. This was a vibrant and questioning environment, where science was grappling with its growing power as the source of empirical data and thus, truth, while religion (in this case Christianity) attempted to either reject or accommodate the changing intellectual world, post-Darwin. The auto-didact was somehow the ghost in the machine at such a moment: what later became orthodoxy in universities was often pioneered by those who without formal training had taught themselves and each other. This was particularly true of *fin de siècle* anthropology in New Zealand, and accounts in some degree for the peculiar vitality and folk-scholar style that makes reading Best both enjoyable and frustrating. He is never absent in his work, nor shy with the pithy or sarcastic aside. Chris Hilliard has criticised these peccadillos in Tuhoe (1925), Best's major study of the history and traditions of the Urewera peoples. He is found guilty of blending his often-unacknowledged sources, overplaying his own existence in the text while managing to depersonalise his Tuhoe informants (Hilliard 118-19). What is missing here is any biographical insight, as if much else were possible to a writer like Best in his time.

Tuhoe, the book for which he is probably best remembered, was the result of his long association with the eponymous Bay of Plenty iwi, Māori who traced their whakapapa back to semi-mythical ancestors and their arrival on these

shores in the canoe *Mātātua*. Best lived in their midst from 1895 to 1910, in the second phase of his career: ostensibly appointed as a quartermaster on the road through the rugged Urewera ranges to Wairoa on the East Coast. Best's real mission was to gather ethnographical information about a people seen to be the last of 'the old-time Maori'. His appointment had been engineered by the Surveyor-General Percy Smith, fellow Polynesian Society member, author and Māoriphile. Recognising Best's voracious intellect, physical hardiness and unique proficiency in the Māori language, Smith encouraged him to be his eyes and ears among Tuhoe. It was a tense compromise at times: not all Tuhoe favoured the road passing through their lands, the best of which had been confiscated in the late 1860s after conflicts with the settler government. Others favoured the access to wage labour, better communications and the benefits of Western technology; yet all were well aware of what had happened to Māori land holdings in other areas of the country where settler numbers and material progress had led to pressure for faster and greater land sales and eventually, bloody conflict.

Best was both an agent of this process and a recorder of cultural losses; his position could hardly have been more ambivalent. Yet he had few difficulties in attracting willing informants: a Māori-speaking Pākehā official was not unusual at that time, but one with a thirst for recording the old ways, customs and whakapapa would have created a powerful interest. It has become fashionable for revisionist histories in New Zealand over the past two decades to create new images of Māori as victims of government duplicity or savvy warriors whose tactics were well ahead of those who eventually defeated them. Māori have been portrayed as either without effective agency or as smart losers by historians such as Belich (1998). The situation was far more complex and nuanced: Best's informants illustrate both the equivalencies and inequalities of power, along with mixed motives and an all too human inability to control the future while making decisions in the present. Those Māori that Best talked to among Tuhoe had been exposed to Christian literacy for over fifty years and were in no way pristine; yet their willingness to share their knowledge with him was not due to their fears of imminent extinction

but because they were used to dealing with Pākehā and sought equality.

While Tuhoe wanted a share in their own future and the benefits of modernity on their own terms, Best and his peers were seeking to excavate the vanished pre-European past. They sought to set down a record of Māori material society, along with its beliefs, before the last of those who retained any such knowledge passed on. As noted, Best's lack of training as an academic anthropologist had not prevented him from reading overseas 'authorities' and contributing to the debates in colonial and imperial settings. He was in many respects the model of a field anthropologist: fluent in the language of those he proposed to study, well-read in the available literature and eager to live among those he proposed to record. The theoretical models of late 19th century anthropology – principally, socio-cultural evolutionism – are long since discredited, but Best made good with what was at his disposal. While the concept of a progressive hierarchy of 'savage-barbarian-civilised' is distasteful today, in his time it made perfect sense to believe that primitive societies were being replaced as part of the upward evolutionary march of humanity, and that anthropologists had a duty to salvage what they could of such dying cultures for posterity. The fact that the colonising cultures were instrumental in such disappearances was, to them, incidental.

Best's literary output while he lived and worked in the Urewera was mainly restricted to articles for the Polynesian Society's journal and working on assembling the manuscript for Tuhoe. His work on Tuhoe, published serially during his residence there, appeared from 1896 onwards in the Society's journal, so that by the beginning of the second decade of the 20th century he was established both nationally and internationally as an expert on Māori society, especially on spiritual matters. Articles on Māori beliefs and spirituality from 1900 onwards were well received, and his definitions of important Māori words such as hau (breath) and wairua (spirit) found their way into New Zealand's principal Māori language dictionary, Henry Williams' *Dictionary of the Māori Language*. The 5th edition of this classic work (still unrivalled today in its 7th) had doubled in size from the 4th in

1892, in greater part as a result of Best's researches.

Another important word, *mauri*, was also affected by this expansion. *Mauri* is defined as a physical and emotional reaction in the earliest editions of the Williams' *Dictionary* (1844) but by 1917 it had become 'Thymos – the life principle of man' (229-30). The transformation can be traced back to Best's reading of F. Max Müller, the philologist and Sanskrit scholar who was a foundation figure of the orientalist movement as it manifested in linguistic discoveries made in the era of the East India Company and the British Raj. Best drew on Müller's Gifford lectures, published in *Anthropological Religion* (1898), for his etymological (and metaphysical) expansion of *mauri*, clearly seeing an equivalence between Māori and archaic Greek concepts such that one could be used to define the other for an English-speaking audience. In Lecture VII 'The Discovery of the Soul in Man and Nature', Müller writes:

The Greek thymos, therefore, meant originally inward commotion ... [it] meant simply what moves within us, [but] it afterwards comprehended both feelings and thoughts ... we never hear of thymos continuing after death [unlike psyche] ... [so it] was really an activity, and not like psyche, a something active (212-13).

Why did Best see Müller's careful distinction of thymos from psyche (soul) as an appropriate rendition of *mauri*? In traditional society, *mauri* was most often manifest in the form of talismans as diverse as snags in an eel river where *karakia* (chants) were intoned to ensure a good catch, or stone images in gardens, or spiritually potent stone objects protecting canoes on long journeys. This latter sense is invoked in *The Maori Canoe*:

Each vessel that came from Polynesia to these isles seems to have had on board some sort of talisman, a *mauri*, *ara*, or *mawe*, looked upon as a sacred object endowed with protective powers, and which brought good luck to the vessel (148-49).

The mauri resided in the talisman, potentiated by the karakia uttered by the tohunga, and by implication the objects were mauri: the metaphysical, so to speak, at one with the physical – and Best understood this. But as the word was moved away from the oral, dialogic culture to which it belonged, it acquired a literary, philosophical meaning that could be understood and classified by literate Pākehā who were themselves excited by the possibilities of comparing cultures old and new.

Best recognised that New Zealand had a literary tradition and added to it with unmatched vigour. While living in his spartan camps in the Urewera, he would often walk miles after a day's work to discuss points of detail with Tutakangahau (who responded in kind). He would spend his evenings reading weighty tomes by candle and lamplight, and copying out the whakapapa lists in his own specially developed shorthand. He had to wait until the last decade of his life to see much of this in print: the manuscript of *Tuhoe* was finished by 1907 but for various reasons the huge two-volume work was not to see the light of day until 1925. Best continued to collect and collate information from his chief long-term informants – men such as Tutakangahau and Paitini – until the former died in 1907. Growing weary of his late labours as a Health Officer, he left the mountain country in 1910 to begin the final phase of his writing life as the government ethnographer at the Dominion Museum in Wellington. He worked exhaustively here until his death in 1931, turning his vast store of notes and records into a series of monographs on Māori life, and gaining the status of a white tohunga on matters Māori. It is these labours that the Museum in its latest incarnation has reissued.

In any assessment of a New Zealand national literature, Best is a foundational figure. That he wrote non-fiction might for some purists place him outside the domain of imaginative writing, but it is clear that he was in fact creating a new national mythology for the settler society. This founding myth underlay the writings themselves: that the European presence in New Zealand was part of a grand evolutionary progress, beneath the wheels of which primitive

societies were swept aside. The need to preserve their prehistory while destroying their presence was the interface of myth with the realpolitik. The story of Best's long writing career illustrates this process, and the writings themselves are in part the evidence of what it means to found a nationalistic settler literature on the back of indigenous displacement. This is both anthropology as sign of Western triumphalism, and writing as record and erasure. Yet many Māori in his day wanted such records: *Tuhoe* was published with official financial backing from prominent Māori leaders such as Sir Apirana Ngata. Had Māori themselves more control of their own destiny in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, it was nevertheless inevitable that their past traditions would have been gradually abandoned for the mixed benefits of modernity. As the traditional digging stick, the *kō*, was early thrown aside for the iron spade of the Pākehā, Māori continued to adapt to and employ technological advances. Best would almost certainly have been employed by Māori – as indeed he was in his time, by Apirana Ngata – to help create necessary national myths for the new society.

Eldson Best entered the literary bloodstream early and is an ongoing presence. Robin Hyde cited his work on Māori society in 'The Singers of Loneliness' (1938), her essay on the making of national literature. Keri Hulme in going to the Williams Dictionary in 1979 to define *mauri* for an article on bicultural poetry found not what her Kai Tahu ancestors might have signified by the term, but Best's more metaphysical rendition: 'life principle, thymos of man' (Hulme 290), a definition as Pākehā as it was Māori. In founding her discussion of bicultural poetry on what she assumes is the definitive Māori meaning of her lodestone concept, Hulme unwittingly assimilates Best and Müller in the process: a rich irony for a writer who speaks proudly of herself as the possessor of a 'mongrel' ethnicity (294). Such creative syncretisms are the often-unacknowledged literary offspring of colonial cultural exchanges, and continue to defy the efforts of linguistic purists and ethnic essentialists to control the meanings of the past, the present or the future. Best's texts are dialogic in the sense that they derive from and contain conversations, no matter how disguised their form; and they are open to further conversations

at this time of republication. The reappearance can be seen as part of a larger decontamination process, where texts discounted or minimised by postcolonial identity politics in one era may be reappraised in the light of another. The following examination of Best's little-known poetic output aims to be a part of that transition.

2. Best and his poetry in the 'Māori Twilight'

Settler society lacks a past so it takes over that of those displaced; modernity thus invents the primitive on the site of its loss, a mechanism similar to that of the Celtic- or Irish-Revival Myth collecting (Stafford and Williams 20).

In terms of his temperament Elsdon Best strikes the reader often with an elegist's tone. It was not that he was simply mourning the passing of pre-European Māori culture and its remote survivals, but as he grew older, like the dispossessed Lear, he saw his own fate in the disappearance of the late-colonial frontier. He was right, and those like him were to pass off the face of the land: the bush felled, the land tamed, farmed and the best of it bought cheaply or confiscated, now owned by the settlers. As Māori retreated to the rural and wilderness margins, Pākehā established great port cities and prosperous rural centres: there was little need for Māori-speaking administrators as Native Schools enforced the use of English, and the pioneering bush frontier became instead a racial and cultural barrier to Māori and their egalitarian civic hopes of the 1850s and 1860s. Māori were expected to assimilate, and either learn the colonisers' language and adapt to civilised life, or talk to each other and quietly disappear. Best, not a Pākehā Māori but deeply identified with those who had retained a measure of their language, customs and lifeways in the remoter regions, seemed to sense his own impending disappearance with that of his Māori campfire companions of old. His death in 1931 was the sunset of those late-colonial administrators and

intellectuals who were bilingual and bicultural. It is within this complex, ambiguous historical and psychological zone that we should view his small but significant poetic output.

While the quote from Stafford and Williams above needs teasing out, the insight that relates to the Celtic Twilight seems apposite. No-one would ever compare Best and Yeats as poets, but they were both writing around the same time in colonial situations as the Victorian era slipped towards military cataclysm and the turning upside down of values that would usher in the Modernist movement. Yeats' adoption of the Irish folk-fairy world to bolster an emerging literary nationalism may not at first glance seem to have much in common with Best's enthusiastic absorption of Māori myth and history, as part of the coloniser's tendency to domesticate their literary inheritance in a land teeming with Māori spirits and their stories. Yet in many ways this feels intuitively right: a Māori Twilight created by Pākehā that reflects some of the origins and needs of its Celtic twin in the northern hemisphere. Listening to Yeats on Paddy Flynn, his font of Irish folklore, it is hard not to draw a parallel with Best and men like Tutakangahau and Paitini from whom he obtained data for the ethnography discussed already and some of the poetry to be examined here. According to Yeats, Paddy Flynn was:

a great teller of tales, and unlike our common romancers, knew how to empty heaven, hell, and purgatory, faeryland and earth, to people his stories. He did not live in a shrunken world, but knew of no less ample circumstance than did Homer himself. Perhaps the Gaelic people shall by his like bring back again the ancient simplicity and amplitude of imagination (Celtic Twilight 6).

Gaelic traditions were re-absorbed by Irish writers of English during the 19th century, and by Yeats' day the re-telling of Celtic myths was no new thing. His dalliance with such revisions did not endure but his language and the thinking in his remarks about Paddy Flynn find a later echo in Best:

Our Maori folk are of those who feel the unseen presence in forests, who hold close kinship with nature, who have a fellowship with every member of the far-scattered Children of Tane. They enter sylvan solitudes imbued with a subconscious feeling that they are among not only friends, but beings related to themselves – for are not men and trees alike descended from Tane (Maori Religion 63)?

Yeats' modernism was consciously reflected in his later poetry; Best, as seen here, had absorbed the late 19th century idea of the subconscious that became a commonplace in the intellectual milieu of post-World War One. Yet his root orientation was towards the past, and by advancing the concept of a Māori Twilight, linked to the Irish sensibility noted above, we can begin to understand both the subject matter and the temper of his poetry. Anthropology in the 19th century grew out of and replaced folklore studies; there are close similarities between Yeats' fairy romances, fuel for the Irish nationalist revival, and Best's fascination with Māori folk beliefs and myth in the invention of a settler literature. Best was a writer with a scientific leaning but early efforts at creating a poetic from his data indicate that he could have gone on in such a genre. His popular anthropological writings were often peppered with snatches of verse and the super-heated metaphors Hilliard deplored in Tuhoe.

Best's poetic output was not large and seems to be concentrated near the beginning of his published work and through the period leading up to and just after his arrival in Wellington in 1910. The early pieces, from 1897 onwards, were published in newspapers such as the Otago Witness (1851-1932) and the Canterbury Times (1865-1917). His known influences are from the Romantics, principally Wordsworth and Coleridge; at least, these are the poets cited in his later writings on Māori and their relationship to Nature. They certainly do not appear to be his teachers of style: the ballad forms and the subject matter of the early work suggest Longfellow, Tennyson and Kipling. Indeed, an auction catalogue of Best's books in Auckland, in May 1969, offered by his grand-nephew Elsdon Craig, included copies of The

Poetical Works of Henry W. Longfellow, The Poetical Works of Bret Harte (both inscribed and/or annotated by Best), and Twenty Poems from Rudyard Kipling, also inscribed. Perhaps the bush ballads of the Bulletin writers in general, and Paterson and Lawson in particular, supplied a local model. Best's work is derivative in the most obvious sense: he is not trying to pioneer a style; rather, he adopts convenient vehicles for the subject and the narrative flow. The earliest works discussed here are 'Mohaka's Raid on Tuhoeland' (1897), based on his initial researches into Tuhoe history and culture; and 'The Men Who Break the Trail' (1898), a hymn to progress. The third and final piece to be analysed, 'But now!', was written in 1913 and is an exiled bushman's response to the corrupting effects of civilised comforts on humankind.

The summary of Best's poetry that follows is drawn from Elsdon Craig's 1964 list of Best's known published work (231-38) and it is worth noting that more poetry may come to light with the increasing availability of online versions of the colonial newspapers that were the commonest venue for verse publication. A significant amount of Best's prose appeared in newspapers because popular journalism was not only a source of additional income but one of the means whereby he disseminated his ideas and discoveries, made his name and created an audience for the later books. That he should try his hand at poetry in the same medium should surprise no-one, given the strong oral base of his researches, the recitative nature of its recensions and the Victorian predilection for narrative poetry.

'Mohaka's Raid on Tuhoeland' appeared in the *Otago Witness* 21 October 1897 (46) under Best's pen-name 'Tuhoe'. 'The Men Who Break the Trail' was published under the same pseudonym 13 January 1898, also in the *Witness* (49). Craig has less detail about 'At The Head of the Road', published 1898 in the Hot Lakes Chronicle, Rotorua, and 'The Children of Pani' which appeared 1904 in the Canterbury Times. 'How Tiaki Tutu went down to Hades', an article in the series 'Sketches from Tuhoeland', was published 1905 in the Times (Craig dates it 1904, but it appeared 8 March 1905). Best includes a

poem in the article, a story about a battle between Tuhoe and Te Arawa. He does not claim authorship, attributing the work to 'the local bard' then cutting the ballad short, saying: 'But enough of the bard of Ruatahuna, for that warlike saga runs into many cantos'. It is plainly Best's work, of a piece with his writing of the time; he was not averse to interpolating unattributed excerpts from his poems into his newspaper writings. This happened again in 1913 with 'Polynesian Voyagers: No. VI. The Peopling of the Many-Isled Sea', published 18 June 1913 in the *Canterbury Times* (15). Writing about the peoples of the Marquesas, he cites ethnologist Abraham Fornander and includes a stanza in the Best style (A later variant of the same stanza appears in the *Otaki Mail*, 29 September 1926).

'Mohaka's Raid on Tuhoeland'



Otago Witness, 21st October, 1897, 46.

Source: Papers Past:

National Library of New Zealand.

‘The Men Who Break the Trail’



Otago Witness, 13th January, 1989, 49.

Source: Papers Past:

National Library of New Zealand.

By 1913, when he wrote ‘But Now!’, Best’s poetry publications were infrequent, as he was fully employed in writing up his researches. The poem is written into a notebook now at the Turnbull Library and was probably never published (*Maori Notebook* no 13 111-12). There is an article from this period, ‘Porirua and They Who Settled It. The Taming of a Wild Land’, that was published in the *Canterbury Times* 11 March 1914 (13). It contains no poetry per se, but Best’s opening salutation ‘To The Old Bush Legion’ is in the form of a mihi, which though written in English is Māori in style and execution, disclosing its origins in oratory:

To the Men who planted Wheat with a Hoe, and ground it in Hand-mills;

The Men who wore Fustian, and left their Coats at Home;
 To the Bush Sloggers of Four Decades, who Carved out Homes with the
 Axe, and Smoothed the way for Us:
 The Trail Breakers of the Past, who, with Butter at Sixpence a Pound,
 Conquered the Wilderness, and Opened up the Dark Places for our
 whirring Motor Cars.
 To the Old-Timers who Succeeded!
 And To Those Who Did Not!!
 Greetings!

This is a good example of Best's adoption of the Māori thought forms and rhetorical techniques which are also apparent in his poetry. The speaker greets his anonymous Pākehā forebears (tūpuna) and declares his admiration for their work in pioneering the civilised comforts the colony has come to enjoy. From the tree-felling of the 'Bush Sloggers' (to whom he belonged) to the advent of roads and 'whirring Motor Cars', Best has been witness to the arrival of industrial modernity, and as we will see he doesn't much like what he helped to create by opening up 'the Dark Places'.

Best's fifteen-year sojourn in the Urewera wilderness began in 1895 and he quickly established relationships with Tuhoe elders and chiefs. Tutakangahau of Maungapohatu was one of the first and most important of these, their friendship lasting almost until the old man's death in 1907. The first poem to be examined here, 'Mohaka's Raid on Tuhoeland', appeared in the Otago Witness two years after his arrival and is based on information Best had received concerning inter-tribal warfare. His versification of Tuhoe history, a not-too-distant battle of the 1820s, was obtained from kōrero (stories) provided for him by his local informants. Unlike the derivative legends Alfred Domett had from Sir George Grey in composing his corpulent romance-epic, *Ranolf and Amohia* (1872), Best's material was based on first-hand anthropological field-work by one who spoke Māori and recorded everything he was told on the spot, at the time. The poem is lengthy (it covers one and a half columns of the Witness), its style and diction are elevated and the subject

and tone Homeric; it affects an epic register but mercifully eschews a Domettian duration. Written no doubt for recitation, it rollicks along in a vigorous ballad metre with rhyming couplets that magick some arresting rhymes: 'The leader of the Legion, the war gods sacred waka / Companioned with his atua, Tu-nui-a-te-ika'. Note the familiarity with the Tuhoe subject matter, and the free and accurate use of Māori, in bringing alive the spiritual world of their warfare ('waka' gets a footnote: 'medium of a god [atua]').

Before proceeding with the poem, it is useful to know that Best included the story of Mohaka in the historical sections of Tuhoe, and a summary of this will guide us into the verse (*Tuhoe* 510-18). The story concerns an attack on Tuhoe by the Ngati Kahungunu hapū, Ngati Ruapani, at Ruatahuna in 1826 (the date was obtained from Tutakangahau, but Best adds it was perhaps around 1828-29). Best writes that he obtained these 'notes concerning Mohaka's raid' from 'Tutakangahau, Tama-rau and a member of the Kahungunu folk of Te Wairoa' (516); thus he had information from the descendants of both combatants. The raid was intended to avenge the expulsion of Ngati Ruapani by Tuhoe from the area of Lake Waikaremoana and includes reference to an ōhaki in the poem's first stanza: 'Their ancient feud to children they bequeathed with dying breath'. Such ōhaki were deathbed instructions given especially by a chief to his successor, including vengeance to be exacted on old enemies.

To the story: Mohaka was a tohunga of Ngati Kahungunu, and a waka atua, a medium of the god/spirit Te Po Tuatini. The matakite (vision, prophecy) that came to him in a dreaming sleep required Kahungunu to capture an urekehu (fair-haired person) from Tuhoe, to bring him alive to the tohunga to be ritually degraded (me mimi ki te waha, by urinating into his mouth). This was a whakaeo, an occult means of depriving Tuhoe of their power. Such a man, Mata-ngaua, was captured near a lone tree as the vision of Mohaka had foreseen, but one of the raiding party slew him, 'and so Ruatahuna was lost to Kahungunu' (513). It appears the one who killed Mata-ngaua was probably related to him; he would have needed good reason to defy the vision coming

from the atua via the seer. The prophecy also said that should the urekehu be slain then Ngati Ruapani would be forced to flee (ka haere peke wha koutou, you will crawl away on all fours), which is exactly what Best's Tuhoe informants assured him did happen (516). There were further disputes over Waikaremoana in the early 1860s which were settled without open conflict: 'the chiefs and catechists and Tamehana of Ngati-Kahu-ngunu, preserved peace' (517). Virtually all of what Best reveals in the narrative of the poem is contained above. What is noteworthy in the bare bones of a story where utu once more works itself out in the economy of Māori society, is the way Best employs recent Māori history factually, along with a rich vocabulary of Māori language and an insider's knowledge of Tuhoe spiritual belief and practice. All this he would publish as anthropological material in the months and years ahead, but what this poem reveals are the first fruits of his field-work and how comfortable he is with Māori realities, as opposed to the external, sentimentalist stance of Domett. For all its technical conservatism, there is a verbal richness and invention in Best's poem that may well be unique among the decorative and derivative verse of 19th century Māoriland. Kahungunu and Tuhoe are portrayed more vividly than the opposing sides in Tennyson's *The Charge of the Light Brigade*. The geographical setting is accurate, the natural world is evoked with the mention of the kawariki and rengarenga, in the context of a call for the fruitfulness of offspring – children who will live to avenge Kahungunu's earlier defeat by Tuhoe.

Best uses an extensive Māori vocabulary to which he adds a list of sixteen footnotes to enlighten Witness readers; an odd juxtaposition of persona and register: poet and anthropologist. This is both an indication of his first-hand knowledge (a willingness to ventriloquise the poem from a substantially Māori world view) and his awareness that urban New Zealand audiences of the time would be lost unless told that a matataua was a scout for a war party, and the 'Fish of Tu' were the slain. Another footnote – 'Te Rehu: Te Rehu-o-Tainui, war god of Tuhoe' – refers to one of the first anthropological articles Best had published, a few months earlier, in the *Journal of the Polynesian Society* (JPS VI, June 1897: No 22, 41-66). This piece describes in some detail

the evolution of a Māori atua, in this case a war god, and how the tohunga was a medium (waka) for the god's prognostications on the upcoming battle. As seen above (and footnoted in the poem) the papa (signs) for the war party on this raid were the urekehu Mata-ngaua, and the lone tree where he stood. All this is described in the poem, right through to the failure of Ngati Ruapani to obey the vision and their eventual retreat on all fours, as prophesied.

What is not immediately obvious to modern readers, and perhaps not to those at the time, is that the poem contains fresh insights into Māori warfare and spirituality. This is not some never-never land of eroticised pseudo-Māori maidens and noble warrior chiefs: underneath the conventional form and heroic diction is an accurate account of how Māori lived, believed and fought in the immediate pre-Treaty era. While his focus was on the past, Best was not romanticising his subject: he was treating Māori seriously. Religious ceremonies to do with success in war are depicted economically, and the accurate use of the correct terminology is glossed so as not to interrupt the movement of the line:

Across the awful tapu the takapau is turned,
And to the horokaka the sacred wallet borne.

The reader can either sweep on with the narrative, or check note 14 to learn that 'Hurihanga takapau' is a 'ceremony to lift the tapu'; 'horokaka' (not attracting a footnote) is an iceplant, as well as the term for a rite performed when war parties left and returned. A sense of what is happening can be gained from the previous narrative context (we know the tohunga is seeking visions, matakite, to ensure success) but the enquiring reader is catered for, as Best shares the kura huna (hidden knowledge). The mingling of alliteration and plosives 'tapu-takapau-turned' gives the insistent metre an energy that derives from commingling lexical items from two different languages.

If the story of Mohaka reveals Best's empathy with Tuhoe and his fascination with the Māori world, 'The Men Who Break the Trail' (*Otago Witness* 13

January 1898) is a chill wind indeed for Māori – and evidence of another aspect of Best's persona. The poem reads both as a Kipling-esque hymn to Progress and an elegy for a pioneer vanguard running out of new rivers to cross as civilisation sweeps the face of the globe, removing 'Stone Age men' by war, or erasing their culture through education and evangelism:

While some are teaching the heathen hymns, for heaven his soul to fit;
And some, to the song of the Winchester, are bidding him rise and get;

While there is a thread of what Lawrence Jones has called William Satchell's 'creative evolution' running through the poem (Jones 143), its main concern is to extol and lament the passing not of indigenous peoples but the 'western Heke's hustling scouts'. A heke is a migration, the advance guard of which Best styles as 'the Homeless Hapu', those mavericks who venture out at the head of any movement of peoples, eager to explore new worlds as yet unseen or unconquered. The 'western Heke' are Europeans, the flood of explorers and settlers who have come south to displace Māori and all others in their path. The advance guard are pictured as 'spray that leads the way', to be followed by the larger waves of the sea of Pākehā behind them, about to inundate the land and overwhelm its residents. Here the politics of displacement and erasure cheerfully borrows Māori concepts to describe those persons and powers that will sweep the speakers of the language away:

From the hidden Land of Tane that gave our nation birth
The mighty wave of the western Heke is surging round the earth.

That wave of socio-cultural evolution, to call it by its anthropological name, was given scientific respectability by thinkers such as Herbert Spencer – with what is now often mistakenly called 'social Darwinism'. For Best and his fellow pioneers of the Homeless Hapu, the call was irresistible: 'They march with Progress in the van and Science in the rear'. Unpalatable as this may sound to readers today, the poem takes an accurate temperature reading of its author's times.

Best's experience as a bushman and wanderer both here in New Zealand and in the United States lifts the poem above its extinctionist clichés to present the reader with a colourful picture of frontier life and works:

They're shearing in the southern lands, they're trading in the north,
 From the hidden depths of Mother Earth, they drag the gold god forth.
 They're carving out four empires with axe and spade and brand;
 They run the long-tailed griffin from Maine to Maoriland.

This vision of furious imperial activities undertaken by pioneering knights of labour is muscular and evocative. What it neglects to mention is that those chasing the whales from New England to Bluff were trading with and intermarrying among Māori, that Māori had gone off sailing the world on Pākehā ships and made it in numbers to the Alaskan gold rushes (Orbell 24-44). Māoriland here, as Stafford and Williams point out, is really Pākehāland, with the old owner's name tacked in an empty gesture on the door. But settlement and cultivation, civilising the wilderness and turning forest into farms is not at the heart of this poem: what resonates most of all is Best's cry to avoid the irritating and constricting demands of a settled progress and its bourgeois conformities, by imagining a restless band of adventurers who must press on or die:

No man may stay the Breaker's way, no woman bid him wait,
 For he is bound for the stamping ground of the restless overland,

These trail breakers (or blazers), their life's work done, must go beyond the beyond; if they are now as obsolescent as the primitives they encountered in the uncivilised wildernesses of their exploring days, then they too must await extinction:

They'll pierce the realm of Further Out, to find themselves among
 The tribes they left in the hidden west in the days when the world was

young.

They don't complain, but like the stoical savages of so much imperial ethnography, 'With never a wail they camp on the trail and wait for the coming end!'

Best was in his early forties when he wrote this, but manages to sound like a well-worn sage. As his triumphalism shrivelled in the new century, this vision of what it meant to be born out of time was realised. The temper of the last poem discussed here is one of misanthropy and a measure of disgust at what urban comforts could do to any free spirit. It was written on the eve of the Great War, at a time when Best, in uniform again with Massey's Cossacks, had gleefully celebrated the cracking of strikers' heads (Craig 164-66). 'But now!' is a bilious response to a world in which he found himself increasingly out of step. If the poem was composed at the same time as Best's return to the saddle, arrayed in cowboy clothes bought in America and mothballed since his arrival home in 1883 (as Craig describes him), the picture it gives of a bushman stranded on Lambton Quay is further darkened by his reactionary swing into conservative politics. The poem – given in full below, with his corrections – sets out to compare Te Whanganui a Tara of the 13th century with the Wellington of Best's day.

But now! : – Miramar 1200 AD 1913 AD

Where once the stalwart savage fought
By hill and vale and creek
The puny, town bred folk await
The factory whistle's shriek.

Where roll the waves of Tane's Sea
Where Kiwa's billows crash
Whourere loomed frontier forts on high [the]
The gleaming 'lectrics flash.

And where the raft borne northern braves
 Crossed Taia's famous strait
 Now sounds upon the evening air
 The sinkers rolling gait.

Where once the moa stalked abroad
 O'er fen land, dune and bush
 Afar the pale skinned tipua hears
 The tram cars ceaseless rush.

Aye, where the lordly Star Fort frowned,
 Where Tara lived and died
 Where hill pas girt the Red Lake round [hedged]
 The whining street cars glide.

No more athwart Hataitai's isle
 The roaring war dance sounds
 No more the pitau swings to line
 The ancient fishing grounds.

For where bold Tara's naked toa
 On human cutlets fed [entrees]
 Your soul destroying tea room girls [the]
 Their luresome comfits spread.

Yea, where the tattoed men of yore
 Strove like Napoleons,
 The hawker with his barrow lures
 Your bright simoleons.

Where brave old Kupe's war canoe
 Swung hissing through the lake,

Your four inch collared gentry view [Our]
 The liner's curving wake.

Where once by hidden trails there lurked
 The fearsome tiwha sign,
 The news from pole to pole afar
 Leaps flashing down the line.

And where the Rua Koha flashed
 O'er Heretaunga's plains
 Now swift as Tamarau there dash
 Your roaring railroad trains.

Whilom on Ranga's [?] lofty peaks
 Flared high the signal fires,
 Alack-a-day, the morning news
 Speeds humming o'er the wires.

Where rugged Neolithic trails
 Gave on our hill set pas [their]
 Now spurn the flying miles behind
 Your whirring motor cars.

(*Maori Notebook* no 13 111-12)

It is interesting first of all to examine some of the corrections: the changes of pronoun and other alterations (the original is square bracketed, right). Best revised certain pronouns after the first stanza to give the speaker a Māori persona, to distance him from modernity. Thus 'the frontier forts' becomes 'our frontier forts' (possibly ambiguous); 'The soul destroying tea room girls' becomes 'Your'; 'Our four inch collared gentry' also becomes 'Your'; and 'Their hillset pas' alters to become 'our hill set pas'. This seems to indicate Best's ambivalence, writing as a member of the settler culture but identifying

with Māori. He admires their courage, vigour, and manly mastery of the elements and the brutal code of war. His disdain for the pampered upper class of his own day is apparent.

While technically plodding, the poem reveals much about Best: all that is worthwhile is in the past, in the age of stone, while modern life is a hollow sham. The virility of the ancient warriors is in sharp contrast with the beneficiaries of Edwardian technology and its emasculating comforts. The war canoes of old, manned and propelled by 'Kupe's warriors', show up the bourgeois, class-ridden degenerates on board their steel liner. The fearsome practice of cannibalism is somehow elevated in contrast to a modern generation of tearoom patrons, lured into excess by sexualised Jezebels, those 'soul destroying tea room girls'. The changes of pronoun noted above distance the writer from modern humanity, aligning the poem's persona with a bygone age, and with Māori. The Pākehā urban present lacks the substance of a Māori past where the challenges to survival would have done for most of the Wellington weaklings in their 'whirring motor cars' whom Best saw around him on his daily walks to the Dominion Museum.

Ironically, for one who accepted evolutionary doctrines, there is a strong implication of the unfit surviving and proliferating. This valorisation of rugged wilderness life, against the domain of the pale office worker he feared becoming is an echo of A.B. Paterson's 'Clancy of the Overflow': 'And the foetid air and gritty of the dusty, dirty city / Through the open window floating, spreads its foulness over all' (Paterson 21). The pleasant strains of 'lowing cattle' are replaced for the speaker by the tramcar's 'fiendish rattle': Best was in fact knocked down by a tram on Thorndon Quay in his later years due to his constant habit of jaywalking (Craig 198). There was certainly trans-Tasman sympathy and a literary precedent reinforcing his disdain for a civilisation that so emasculated its menfolk.

In many respects, the poem has strong undertones of a migrant in a state of culture shock: Best was not long out of the bush, and was having great

difficulty adjusting to city life. Unable to return to his 'homeland', he sounds angry and depressed, finding himself late in life in an alien terrain. As a married man, anxious to provide for his younger wife, he felt compelled to live and work in the city in order to turn his massive store of knowledge from notes and articles into published books, Best was stuck – and he deeply resented it. The shadow of the teenager who had fled a life like that of Melville's Bartleby the scrivener for farm and bush was ever present during Best's remaining Wellington days. Too old to swing an axe, and too important to waste repeating his years of field-work, Best had become something of a social misfit and spiritual exile, increasingly divorced from the contemporary world. His very average piece of verse is an early example of the 'Man Alone' psychology that emerges more clearly in later writers such as John Mulgan and Barry Crump: maladapted males in flight from intimacy and engagement with contemporary realities.

Best's final years were spent in the Dominion Museum producing the great body of work he would bequeath: what we see in this poem was captured clearly by a British visitor to the country in 1929, Margery Perham. This remarkable woman (1895-1982) had much in common with Best. A tutor in Modern History at Oxford, she became an expert in colonial administration and made numerous overseas trips, witnessing conflicts from Somaliland (1922) to Nigeria (1968) where at the age of seventy she witnessed the Biafran war. An influence on British colonial policy, she was the first Director of Oxford's Institute for Colonial Studies. In 1929 she visited this country as part of a Rhodes Travelling Fellowship, ranging extensively through the North Island (including a trip to the Urewera), meeting as many politicians and government officials as she could manage over the course of three weeks. Her goals were to examine race relations and colonial administration (she had been highly critical of New Zealand's handling of the Mau protests in Western Samoa during the mandate). She later wrote an account of the Fellowship in which she describes a meeting with Elsdon Best.

Told she must talk to 'the greatest living authority on Maori', she visited the

old man in the Dominion Museum in 1929, two years before his death. Her account is vital in any estimation of Best: an outsider with academic training and a wide knowledge of colonial race relations, she was in no way dewy-eyed about the fate of indigenous peoples in the Empire. A rare view of the white tohunga at his desk in his final days emerges (Perham 173-74). Best was 'so old and so valuable' she was told, that 'Funds had been raised mainly by the Maoris, to keep him alive and writing until the last possible moment'. She found him engaged upon writing 'still another work on Maori religious thought' and saw 'an enormous man [...] eyes brilliant with intelligence and vitality'. He told her how he had fought against Māori; and of his own vanishing tribe of Pākehā hoariri (fighting friends) – 'how men of his generation who had fought Maori loved them' (173). He described his determination after these wars to live among Māori and how he had been adopted by them. Surviving wartime opponents often find they have more in common with each other than with the civilians they were sent to defend: they become blood brothers. If 'real Māori' belonged to the past, so did Best: in writing to the very end, he was as much involved in an act of self-preservation as in the retrieval of Māori realities.

Perham summarised what Best was saying: not until Pākehā had fully understood '[Maori] customs and ideas [...] and [knew] their vast genealogies by heart' would they be allowed 'into the innermost secrets of their thoughts'. He talked so she could see 'what a tragedy the white invasion had been to the old generation of Maoris [...] the circle of their ideas [...] broke almost at a touch by the white man'. The Māori patterns of life, 'the elaborations of tapu and mana which Best himself can hardly understand [...] were as delicate and as complex as a cobweb and were dislocated by the gun, money and Christianity'. An old chief (possibly Hamiora Pio) is quoted on the defilement of 'our sacred life principle of man', presumably meaning mauri although Perham says this was as close as Best felt he could translate the speaker's Māori. His people were left to watch and die, in despair for themselves, hoping that their grandchildren 'might learn to become Pakehas'. Best recounted another story of a 'tattooed old man' (most likely Tutakangahau)

discoursing on mauri in Socratic fashion, picking up a stone near their campfire and questioning how 'substance could hold together unless some spiritual force existed within it'.

Perham found Best fascinating on subjects in the past, but when it came to the present, and she tried to draw him on 'the Maori of today', he became less interesting. He is *living in the past*, she wrote, re-creating it in his books (174, emphasis added). He gave her one of these and sent her off to see his protégé Johannes Andersen (1873-1962) who was more forthcoming on the present parlous state of Māori in relation to land and labour. While it is not surprising that an elderly historian was less engaged with the contemporary world than his younger fellow citizens, Perham's observations are telling, and accord with the psychology that emerges from the poetry. Best was 'less interesting' about New Zealand in the late 1920s because his interests lay elsewhere, in a past he inhabited, both real and imaginary. While she reveals his willingness to send money and goods to his old friends – 'Oh Best, I have no blanket. Give me one immediately [Tuhoe]' – Best was not concerned with the descendants of the 'old time Maori' unless it was through leaving them a record they might one day access in their assimilated state. Best appears as preternaturally ancient, a Jungian wizard in his den, and yet somehow immature. His peculiar temperament fitted him for the role he had fashioned and made his own. Perham's portrait is of a priest alone with his books, a sorcerer with his spells, almost a type of that esoteric Māori priesthood he championed, whose ways were unknown to the common people. A seven-year-old boy's declaration that he wanted 'to be a Maori tohunga' seems oddly fulfilled in this picture of his last years (Craig 12-13). His childhood days in Porirua, playing with the Māori children from the pa, going eeling with his mates and no doubt learning to speak the language at an early age had set him on a course from which he hardly deviated.

The poetry written by Elsdon Best in his long career was not part of a significant historical change of style or content, nor very influential in and of itself. Its principal interest is biographical: what was the psychology of such

an influential figure, and how does it bear on what he wrote at differing periods in his life? The verse is fascinating for the insight it gives both into him and his times, and as a commentary on the more serious ethnographic writings. Best was an occasional poet, but he knew how to compose and deploy a bush ballad, and what he did write captured certain important aspects of the era through which he lived. He introduced a sharply observed Māori historical reality in the Mohaka poem, and while he never addressed contemporary Māori problems in his work (as Perham observed), he was well equipped to take them seriously as subjects for vernacular poetry, and do them justice. His Spencerian stance on the vanishing native – and the equally endangered white explorer vanguard – reveals beneath the rhetoric a state of anxiety about the effects of the inevitable “Progress” he was hymning. His final rejection of modernity as it manifested in consumerism and urban decadence has a prophetic disdain that seems to owe something to fascist and eugenicist notions. Male power and a warrior past are celebrated; yet while logically only the fit should survive, it seems that material progress merely gives birth to a race of weaklings. Perpetual struggle and war was one answer to this contradiction, something the great dictators of 20th century he rejected would put to the test in the decade after his death.

Appendix

A select bibliography of Elsdon Best’s writings. Best published monographs, pamphlets and numerous newspaper and journal articles 1886-1932. Some of this material is listed below.

A. Books and Articles

Waikaremoana: The Sea of Rippling Waters. Wellington: Government Printer, 1897.

The Land of Tara. Rpt. from *Journal of the Polynesian Society*, New Plymouth: Avery, 1919.

The Maori: Memoirs of the Polynesian Society, Volume 5. 2 vols. Wellington: Tombs, 1924.

The Maori as He Was: A Brief Account of Maori Life as it was in Pre-European Days. Wellington: Dominion Museum, 1924.

Tuhoe: The Children of the Mist. 2 vols. New Plymouth: Avery, 1925.
'Published by the Board of Maori Ethnological Research for the Author and on behalf of the Polynesian Society.'

B. Bulletins published by the Dominion Museum, Wellington, and printed by the Government Printer

1912, No. 4. *The Stone Implements of the Maori*.

1916, No. 5. *Maori Storehouses and Kindred Structures*.

1924, No. 10. *Maori Religion and Mythology*.

1925, No. 7. *The Maori Canoe*.

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No. 9. *Maori Agriculture*.

1927, No. 6. *The Pa Maori*.

1929, No. 12. *Fishing Methods and Devices of the Maori*.

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1942, No. 14. *Forest Lore and Woodcraft of the Maori*.

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